THINGS NEW AND OLD

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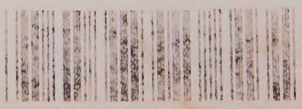

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THINGS NEW and OLD

Old and New Testament Studies

by

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Editor "Reference Bible"
Author of "Addresses on Prophecy," etc.

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Foreword

"Things New and Old" is a compilation of Old and New Testament Bible Studies covering very interesting historical portions of the Old Testament and the Four Gospels. They were written by Dr. C. I. Scofield for "Our Hope" eighteen years ago under the title "The Heart of the Lesson," being explanations of the Sunday School lessons. Inasmuch as the International Sunday School lessons are taken periodically from the same portions of Scripture the volume is of permanent value.

It is needless to call attention to the sane and spiritual expositions of Dr. Scofield, the excellent style and the fine illustrations. We are sure this book will be widely used by thousands of Sunday School workers, Bible teachers, and all believers who love real Bible study.

But "Things New and Old" contains more than that. It contains a number of lectures and addresses delivered by Mr. Scofield at the former Sea Cliff Bible Conferences. These lectures were stenographically reported and published in "Our Hope." In re-publishing them they were carefully edited by the writer; their happy style in the form of a spoken address has been maintained throughout. The addresses on the Holy Spirit especially are of great importance today. May the Lord's blessing be upon the publication of this volume.

Arno Clemens Gaebelein
Editor "Our Hope"

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Contents

Part I. Old Testament Studies.

The Suffering Saviour 9
The Gracious Invitation 11
The Prince of Peace 14
Hezekiah's Prayer 15
Hezekiah Opens the Temple 18
The Kingdom Divided 20
Jeroboam's Idolatry 22
Captivity of the Ten Tribes 24
Asa's Good Reign 27
Jehoshaphat's Reform 29
Joash the Boy King 31
Joash Repairs the Temple 33
Isaiah's Message to Judah 35
Josiah's Good Reign 37
Josiah and the Book of the Law 39
Jehoiakim Burns the Word of God 41
Jeremiah in the Dungeon 44
Manasseh's Sin and Redemption 46
Omri and Ahab 48
God Taking Care of Elijah 51
Obadiah and Elijah 53
Elijah on Mount Carmel 56
Elijah Discouraged 59
Elijah Encouraged 61
Elijah Taken Up Into Heaven 63
Israel Reproved 65
Elisha Succeeds Elijah 67
The Widow's Oil Increased 70
Elisha and the Shunamite 73
Elisha and Naaman 75
Elisha at Dothan 78
The Captivity of Judah 80
The Life Giving Stream 82
Daniel in Babylon 85
Daniel and Belshazzar 87
Daniel in the Lion's Den 89
Returning from the Captivity 92
Rebuilding the Temple 94
Power Through God's Spirit 96
Esther Pleading for Her People 99
Ezra's Journey to Jerusalem 102
Nehemiah's Prayer 104

Part II. New Testament Studies.

The Boyhood of Christ 111
The Preaching of John the Baptist 113
Baptism and Temptation 115
Rejected at Nazareth 117
Calling Four Disciples 120
A Sabbath in Capernaum 122

Christ Forgives Sin 124
Christ and the Sabbath 127
Hearers and Doers of the Word 129
He Calms the Storm 131
The Death of John the Baptist 134
Feeding the Five Thousand 136
The Visit to Tyre and Sidon 138
Peter Confesseth Christ 141
The Transfiguration 143
The Mission of the Seventy 146
Prayer and Promise 149
Watchfulness 152
The Prodigal Son 155
Christ Teacheth Humility 159
The Passover 161
Christ's Trial Before Pilate 164
Christ Crucified 166
Christ Risen 169
Christ the Life and Light 172
The Witness of John the Baptist 174
His First Disciples 176
The First Miracle in Cana 179
Nicodemus 181
At Jacob's Well 183
The Second Miracle in Cana 186
At the Pool of Bethesda 188
The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes 190
At the Feast of Tabernacles 192
The Slavery of Sin 194
The Healing of the Man Born Blind 197
The Good Shepherd 199
The Raising of Lazarus 201
The Supper at Bethany 204
The Entry Into Jerusalem 206
Washing the Disciples' Feet 209
The Vine and the Branches 211
His Prayer 214
Before Pilate 217
The Crucifixion 219
The Resurrection 222
The Message of the Risen Christ 225
The Heavenly Home 228
Abstinence for the Sake of Others 230

Part III. Lectures and Addresses.

The Book of Job 237
The Song of Solomon 247
The Church and the Churches 257
The Personal Relationships of the Holy Spirit 275
The Work of the Indwelling Spirit 283
Barabbas' Theory of Atonement 294
May the Lord Come at any Time? 297
The Walk of Faith 301
Notes on Colossians 307

Old Testament Studies

THE SUFFERING SAVIOUR.

(Isaiah lii: 13—liii: 12.)

I. The Analysis.

1. Christ's ultimate triumph (lii: 13-15). 2. The rejected Christ (liii: 1-3). 3. The suffering substitute (liii: 4-6). 4. The resignation of the sufferer (liii: 7-9). 5. God's victorious purpose.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

As to the whole meaning of this great chapter there is, of course, no controversy. It is the great atonement chapter. It is to the prophetic part of the Old Testament what the 16th of Leviticus is to the typical part. In the 16th of Leviticus we have, so to speak, the anatomy of atonement, in the 52d and 53d of Isaiah the philosophy of the atonement. As both chapters are expressly appropriated in the New Testament to Christ (Heb. ix: 7-12; Acts viii: 32-35), it follows that any theory of the atonement which claims to be Scriptural must gather into itself the teachings of both. Our lesson, however, requires us to look at but one of these two great chapters.

It seems to me that the heart of things here is three-fold.

1. The sufferings of Christ in atonement were substitutional, vicarious. He died, not as a piteous spectacle, with intent to produce by his agonies a subjective moral influence on human hearts, though surely the fact that we, like the brutal Roman soldiers, can apathetically "watch him there" (Matt. xxvii: 36), is the final proof of our depravity.

Nor did he die as a martyr, immolated in a great cause. He was under no necessity of death so far as human power was concerned. Of his life he said, "I lay it down of myself, no man taketh it from me." When the traitor-led crowd came out against him into the garden, he had but to say the dread, "I AM," and they "went backward and fell to the ground." More than twelve legions of angels were ready to deliver him.

There is but one explanation of the death of Christ which satisfies the Scriptures: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

"Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree that we, being dead to sins, might be made the righteousness of God in him."

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

2. The sufferings of Christ in atonement were not chiefly physical, but spiritual.

His soul was made an offering for sin. The soul is the seat of the affections, desires, will. Yet in the death of Christ we see the sufferings of the only man who ever loved God perfectly; whose whole desire was the father's pleasing and who could say of himself, "Lo, I came to do thy will, O God." But his holy soul was made an offering for sin. No man could have done that. Inevitably it must be

written, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief."

The token of this was Christ's desolate cry from the cross: "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Put the emphasis hard on the "thou," and the "me." Why, indeed, should the only perfectly holy, perfectly obedient Servant whom the Father ever had on earth be forsaken of God in his utmost need?

The answer, and there can be but one, is that the Holy One was in that dread hour the sinner's substitute.

3. The sufferings of Christ were germinant. Death pangs, indeed, they were also birth pangs. The anguish of his death was that we might never "taste" death (though we may die), and therefore true death agonies; but the anguish was also the anguish of our new birth. It was the "Travail of his soul." The corn of wheat had fallen into the ground and was dying that the life of it might pass into countless corns of the wheat of God.

THE GRACIOUS INVITATION.

(Isaiah lv: 1-13.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *An invitation to perfect satisfaction* (verses 1, 2). 2. *An invitation to prosperity and power* (verses 3-5). 3. *An invitation to pardon* (verses 6, 7). 4. *The assurance of the Lord* (verses 8-11). 5. *The promise of peace and joy* (verses 12, 13).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

But for the 53d of Isaiah, the 55th could never have been written. God can sell wine and milk without money and without price because another has paid the price. If God forgave sin with no vindication of his holy law, he would be an accomplice in the violation of that law. A law commanding what is right, and forbidding what is wrong, with no penalty for its violation would be the jest of the criminal, and if so it were with the law of God it would be the derision of devils. Sin is the most awful fact in the universe. The word awful and its synonyms would have no place nor use in the vocabularies of men if sin had never been. Sin is even a more awful fact than hell, for hell is but a consequent and inevitable corollary of sin. Without sin there could be no hell, for hell is but eternal sinning.

It suits the "liberal" churches, apparently, to forget the fifty-third of Isaiah, with its suffering Servant of Jehovah, and to call the fifty-fifth chapter the "Gospel." No. The fifty-fifth of Isaiah is not the Gospel—it is but the Gospel invitation. A dinner and an invitation to dinner are two different things.

And this Gospel feast of wine and milk is the costliest feast this universe ever saw or ever will see. It cost the agonizing death of the Son of God. The Gospel is the glad tidings that God himself has undertaken to do, and has done, everything needful for the salvation of the greatest of sinners, and that now God can be just and the justifier of him that believeth.

But the emphasis of this lesson certainly falls on the freeness of Gospel salvation. There is absolutely nothing to apply. Any "Gospel" that leaves one single atom of salvation to be wrought out by the sinner is that "other" Gospel

upon the preaching of which rests the solemn anathema of God (Gal. i: 6-9). If the true Gospel is preached the hearer may indeed reject it, but, also, he may accept it some other day. But if the false Gospel is preached he is left with nothing to accept. He is led astray by a false guide-post.

"Without money and without price." That is the mark of the true message. If there are some pains to be borne by the believer to complete his salvation, whether here or in purgatory; if there is some work of righteousness which rests upon the believer as part of the redemption price, then it is the false Gospel.

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

The heart of this lesson lies, I think, in two solemn facts.

The first is that this very freeness of the Gospel leaves every man's salvation wholly in his own power. God has done all that is required whether by his holy law or by the sinner's extreme need. Both have been considered. If some were too great sinners to be reached by the mercy of God, or if the Gospel required of man any other act but faith in order to his salvation, then, indeed, for many there would be excuse.

And the second part of the matter is that it is an urgent affair. No call is made to consider or to promise. "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near."

THE PRINCE OF PEACE.

(Isaiah ix: 1-7.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Gentile Opportunity* (verses 1, 2).—In these verses there is a mere suggestion, mysterious doubtless to the Prophet himself (see 1 Peter i: 10, 11), in this reference to "Galilee of the Gentiles," and in a "great light" to people sitting in darkness, of the blessing of the Gentiles anterior to the full blessing of Israel. From Matt. iv: 13-16; Rom. ix: 30-33; xi, we know that the prediction refers to the present Gentile age.

2. *The Millennial Blessing of Israel under the Prince of Peace, on David's Throne* (verses 3-7).—(See below.)

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

Here we have the glorious fulfilment in the reign of the Prince of Peace, of that old, immutable Davidic covenant. Note the order.

First, there is the obscure prophecy of the first advent of Christ and of the present blessing of the Gentiles, which, in the New Testament, notably in Matt. iv: 13-16, and in Romans ix: 30-33, and Romans xi, is expanded into glorious fulness of meaning. It should be remembered that while the Old Testament prophets did not see the *church* (Eph. iii: 1-10) they *did* see a period of Gentile blessing which is fulfilled as they did not know, but we in the light of a fuller revelation do, in the church.

Secondly, there is a reference to the trials of the remnant of Jews in the land just before the setting up of the kingdom (Isa. viii: 21, 22; ix: 1, 4, 5). Other passages in Isaiah and in other of the prophets make clear what taken alone

seems an obscure statement. Briefly, the prophetic forc-view is that before the setting up of the kingdom at the second coming of Christ, a remnant of Jews will return to the land. As the day draws near severe persecution falls upon them, even the "great tribulation" spoken of by our Lord (Matt. xxiv: 21, 22). This culminates in the gathering of the Gentile powers against Jerusalem (Zech. xiv: 1, 2) and the return of the Lord in glory for the deliverance of His people, and the establishment of His Kingdom (Zech. xiv: 3, 5; Rev. xix: 19-xx: 4; Isa. ix: 4, 5).

Thirdly, we have that wonderful description of the King which of itself, and if it stood alone, would establish forever the full deity and humanity of our Lord. Observe the exquisite accuracy of Scripture. The *child* is *born,* the *Son* is given. It could not be said of him who "was in the beginning with God, and who was God" that he was "born." No. Mary's child was born, and incarnate in that child the eternal uncreated Son was "given."

Fourthly, the divine-human King sits upon the throne of David. By no ingenuity can this be explained of the present. He is seated now on the throne of his Father, and is coming to sit on his own throne (Rev. iii: 21).

And the heart of it all is, that despite the unbelief, wickedness and failure of man, God literally fulfills all of his covenants.

HEZEKIAH'S PRAYER.

(Isaiah xxxviii: 1-8.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The King's Prayer* (verses 2, 3). (See Heart.) 2. *The Lord's answer* (verses 4-8).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

No wholly consistent lesson can be made of the eight verses selected. Never was the context more necessary to the right understanding of a passage of Scripture. We shall, therefore, consider the whole chapter.

1. Hezekiah's thoughts about death give with completeness the Old Testament view. The Old Testament horizon was the grave. Not, of course, that the Old Testament saint had no intimations of immortality. Abraham laid hold on the thought of resurrection when he "Accounted that God was able to raise Isaac even from the dead." Job knew that though after death worms should destroy his body, yet in his flesh he should see God; and two hundred years after Hezekiah's time resurrection was plainly taught through Daniel.

But these were but dim and occasional foregleams and by no means filled the Jewish mind. Long life was the crowning blessing of the righteous, and grey hairs the crown of glory. All the distinctive blessings of the Israelites were earthly blessings, and the curses were earthly deprivations and sufferings (Deut. xxviii: 1-37). Sheol was the place of silence, of cessation. No voice praised God out of a grave; in the coffin no hands worked for God. What might be beyond the grave was not revealed. It was little in the thoughts of a godly Jew. To live long in the land which the Lord his God had given him, and therein to serve and glorify Him, was the characteristic thought of such a Jew.

2. It is, therefore, absurd to quote from the Old Testament to prove the state of the righteous dead. All that is fully disclosed in the New Testament. It is not that the one contradicts the other, but that the later revelation supplements and completes the older. It is still true that there is

no devising nor praising in the grave. Whatever work our hands find to do must be done now or not at all. But the newer revelation lifts the veil and shows us that only the body enters the grave, and that for the righteous to be "absent from the body" is to be "present with the Lord."

The plan of the life of the New Testament saint, therefore, takes in two worlds, and he knows that the chief significance of this life is its relation to the life beyond the grave. Long life is not an unmixed blessing, nor brevity of life a calamity.

3. We are now ready to see the significance of Hezekiah's distress and the meaning of his plea: "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight."

The king does not mean that his heart has been sinless, but that it has been "upright," which is the literal meaning of the word rendered "perfect." He has been over on God's side. He has desired God's will, and so his life, as to its whole trend and intent has been good.

And his point is that, according to the promises made distinctively to the Israelitish people, such a life should be long. But he was sick unto death, as a prophet of God had just told him. It seemed like a failure of the covenant, and his prayer, which would be arrogant self-righteousness in a Christian under grace, was a true utterance of faith in a sincere and godly Jew under the old dispensation. Being what he was, why should he die?

Therefore the abiding heart of this lesson is a truth good for all time and in all dispensations, that the life of the godly is a life of tested and exercised faith. The promises of God are yea and amen, but they do not work automatically. Back of the promise is the living God, and he will be

inquired of. His promises are eternally good at their face value, but they must be presented.

Apparently, Hezekiah had overlooked that. He was dealing with the promises of God as many good people now do —apart from God Himself.

HEZEKIAH RE-OPENS THE TEMPLE.

(2 Chr. xxix: 18-31.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *Cleansing of the Vessels* (verses 18, 19).—The special form of consecration here is the restoration to the divine service of that which belonged to Him.

2. *Sacrifice in View of the Sin of Judah* (verses 20-24). —The law required sacrifices such as these to be oft repeated—we have "one sacrifice for sins forever" (Heb. x: 12).

3. *The Praise of a Cleansed and Restored People* (verses 25-28).—This is the order of Psalm li (see below).

4. *The Worship of a Praising People* (verses 29, 30.)— (See below.)

5. *The Gifts of a People Right with God* (verse 31).— (See below.)

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

So intimately connected are the parts of this precious lesson that they must be considered together. The lesson is all heart; and it is found in the moral order of the return to God of His own people who have become backslidden through sin. Very much superficial and therefore unsatisfying work is done along this line. Conscious of a loss of

communion and so of joy and power, we come to God with general and indefinite confessions of coldness and sinfulness, but without deep searching of heart and exercise of conscience, and we find ourselves soon back on the old ground of failure. Here thorough work was done, and the divine order of restoration is here illustrated. Let us mark the steps.

1. Cleansing of the vessels. For the Christian this takes two forms. (1) The cleansing of the ways of the daily walk. This is *illustrated* by John xiii: 4-10, and is *performed* according to 1 John i: 9; for confession is just bringing the defiled feet to the Lord Jesus to be made clean. (2) The second form of cleansing is separation from vessels unto dishonor according to 2 Tim. ii: 20, 21. This makes us "vessels unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use."

2. The acknowledgment of the efficacy of the "one sacrifice for sins forever"—the restoration of the Cross to its right place as the sin offering which has settled forever the whole sum of our guilt and demerit before God; and the burnt offering in which Jesus Christ "offered Himself without spot unto God" in our stead and behalf. Faith, dimmed by backsliding and sin, once more sees that as all our demerit was borne by Christ, so all His glorious merit is accounted to us. What inevitably follows is:—

3. The praise of a cleansed and restored heart, now again rejoicing in God through Jesus Christ. In the tabernacle the incense which was burnt on the golden altar was kindled by a live coal from the brazen altar where sacrifice was offered, so true praise like true worship is set aflame by the sacrifice of Christ. Then follows something deeper, higher than praise:—

4. The *worship* of cleansed, restored, and singing hearts.

Praise is vocal, expressive, a testimony. David said that many should *hear* his new song. Worship is "in spirit"; the bowing of the whole inner self in adoration, wonder and love before the Father. Note this order in 1 Tim. i: 12-17. Paul breaks into *praise* in verse 12, into *worship* in verse 17, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."

5. And now the heart, cleansed, restored, filled with the new song, and bowed in adoration, is ready for *service.* "Come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings unto the house of the Lord."

THE KINGDOM DIVIDED.

(1 Kings xii: 12-20).

I. The Analysis.

1. *The folly of the King* (verses 12-14). When will the people of God learn that they need divine wisdom as well as divine righteousness? Not all the calamities of life come from wickedness, for folly, too, brings in its train manifold evil.

> "Earth bears no balsam for mistakes;
> Men crown the knave, and scourge the fool
> That did his will; but Thou, O Lord,
> Be merciful to me, a fool."

2. *The unfailing purpose of God* (verse 15; see below).

3. *The kingdom divided* (verses 16-20). It should be remembered that this division, which still continues though all the tribes are in dispersion, is but the disciplinary and not the ultimate purpose of God. The whole nation is to

be restored to Palestine and reunited as one nation under the millennial reign of Christ (Jer. xxiii: 5-8; Ezk. xxxvii: 15-28; Hosea iii: 4, 5; Luke i: 30-33; Acts xv: 14-17).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The heart of this lesson is the truth, too little regarded and too often forgotten, that God holds nations equally with individuals to a moral accountability the basis of which is righteousness. The only distinction is that personal responsibility has eternal consequences because man is an immortal being, while nations, which are creatures of time, are judged and punished in this present world.

The general truth that God holds nations and their rulers to a moral accountability based on righteousness has both general and particular illustrations in Scripture. Nebuchadnezzar, the ruler of the first universal Gentile world power (Dan. ii: 37, 38), was taught that his authority was due to the permissive will of a God whom he had neither known nor worshipped (Dan. iv: 34, 35); and well indeed would it have been for his successors in the Gentile world dominion, which began with him and still continues, had they remembered Nebuchadnezzar's lesson. Forgetting it, they have unconsciously submitted to the usurpation of Satan, who is now the unseen prince of this world (John xiv: 30; Matt. iv: 8, 9; Eph. vi: 12, R. V.).

For this, and the misgovernment, bloodshed and cruelty that have resulted from it, the nations of the earth are to be judged at the second coming of Christ (Matt. xxv: 31-45).

It is interesting to note that the nations *as such* (the judgment of Matt. xxv is not to be confounded with the last judgment of Rev. xx: 11-15, which is 1,000 years later) are subjected to a great final test just before the return of the Lord in glory, and by that test they are judged. A Jew-

ish remnant will turn to Christ after the departure of the church (1 Thess. iv: 14-17) and will herald the kingdom among all nations for a (final) "witness". These are the "brethren" of Matt. xxv: 40-45. A last illustration of the principle that God judges the Gentile nations according to their treatment of the Jew (Gen. xii: 3; xv: 13, 14; Deut. xx: 6, 7; Micah iv: 11-13; Joel iii: 6, 8).

But Israel, as a nation, stands upon different promises and is held to a different responsibility. Chosen to be a witness to the unity of God in the midst of polytheism, and of the personality of God in the midst of pantheism, the point of Israelitish failure is not misgovernment, but idolatry. Traced back through the secondary causes of Hadad's rebellion and Jeroboam's capacity, and Rehoboam's folly and vanity, the primary cause of the rending of the Hebrew commonwealth is distinctly stated to be the introduction of idolatry by Solomon (1 Kings xi: 6-13).

But whether in the ancient divisions and captivities of Israel, or in the swift coming crash and divine judgment of the great Gentile nations, the principle holds—God judges and punishes nations equally with persons.

JEROBOAM'S IDOLATRY.

(1 Kings xii: 25-33.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The king's substitute religion* (verses 25-31). The choice is never between true religion and no religion, but between true religion and false religion. Man must have something which at least pretends to respond to the soul's demand for God, and to the accusings of conscience. Cain

had a religion, the heathen have religions, and antichrist will have a religion.

2. *The king's innovations* (verses 31-33). The student of Scripture has but to compare the two feasts of Pharaoh, charged as they were with great typical and dispensational meanings, with Jeroboam's substitutes to see how poor and barren are mere human rituals.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

Jeroboam is the finest instance in Scripture of an apostate. Apostasy and heresy are widely different things. Heresy is error about truth; apostasy is deliberately forsaking truth. Note the marks of Jeroboam's apostasy. It began in his unwillingness to be subject to the *authority* of God. For it was God who established the kingdom in the family of David (2 Sam. vii: 11-17), and to reject the rule of that royal line was to reject the authority of God. All apostasy begins in self will, in insubordination to the divine ordering of things. The first apostate, Satan, began by saying, "I will" (Isa. xiv: 13). The underlying motive in the great apostasy into which Christendom is now rushing is rebellion against the authority of holy Scripture. And an able and energetic apostate easily draws away with him all the tribes of those who hate God's way. Satan's "Yea, hath God said?" (Gen. iii: 1) is speedily followed by "Ye shall not surely die."

But an apostate must have a religion, so only that it be not a religion of divine authority. Jeroboam, therefore, having set aside God's king, now sets aside God's altar and God's priests, and substitutes an altar and a priesthood of his own making. Jehovah had appointed Jerusalem as the alone place where sacrifices might be offered and the tribe of Levi as the priestly tribe, but all that was nothing to

Jeroboam. The great apostasy from the purity and simplicity of apostolic Christianity has substituted for the Christian priesthood of all believers equally an order of priests or "clergymen," who alone have right to preach, to baptize, or to administer the Lord's table. Jeroboam knew, also, the desire of the natural heart for holy places and religious ceremonial, and provided these things. But, most of all, the apostate king showed that satanic craft which marks all apostasy by building his new religion so largely out of genuine Jewish materials. He established his city between Ebal and Gerizim, and his temple upon the latter, the mount of the blessings (Deut. xi:29); and he made much of Penuel, where Jacob had wrestled, and Bethel, where Jacob had dreamed. It is a solemn truth that one may call oneself a Christian, and build a religious system very largely out of Christian things, adopting the Christian standards of morality and good works, and yet be an utterly godless apostate. For if I reject the absolute authority of God's Word, and make a Christ to please myself, I am an idolater, even though I call my human conception by His holy name and erect a cross upon the summit of my costly church. Only he who receives the Christ of God is that God-Man who saves through the shedding of His precious blood all who simply believe on Him.

CAPTIVITY OF THE TEN TRIBES.

(2 Kings xvii:6-18.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The End of the Northern Kingdom* (verses 1, 18).—It is significant that while a remnant of Judah returned from

the Babylonian captivity, the ten tribes have not yet been brought back, nor is their whereabouts known.

2. *Jehovah's Indictment of Israel* (verses 7-17).—This is reducible to general counts. 1. *Ingratitude,* verse 7. All their sins were against that Jehovah who had compassionated their slavery in Egypt and had redeemed them. 2. *Disobedience,* verses 8, 15, 16. They forsook the will of God for self will, and the statutes of the heathen. 3. *Apostasy,* verses 9-17. They forsook the worship of Jehovah for the worship of false gods and idols.

3. *The Lord's Long Suffering* (verse 13).—Every prophet testified against the sins of Israel, but, also, had testified of the willingness of God to forgive, and to heal if only they would turn to Him in repentance and obedience.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

Inevitable judgment for unforsaken sin—that is the large truth of this lesson. Let it be remembered that seven hundred years of Israelitish history lie between this act of final judgment, and the day when, under the warnings of Moses as recorded in Deuteronomy, God had brought the people into that land. Moses had sounded the faithful warning: "If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book.....then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful.....and the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other" (Deut. xxviii: 58-65).

How little the warning was heeded, how soon the sin came, the inspired history bears witness. Then came that which had not been foretold—the six hundred years of the divine forbearance and long suffering, together with ceaseless efforts to win back His people. So far as Moses' words went, judgment might have fallen instantly upon the

disobedience. What God did not reveal through Moses, was the age long interval of forbearance. Just so, in the Old Testament prophecies the first and second advents of Messiah blend in one horizon, for to the Old Testament prophet the day of grace which has lasted now almost nineteen centuries was not revealed (Eph. iii: 2-10). No wonder they "searched diligently," "what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when he testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories which should follow" (1 Pet. i: 10, 11).

But "the long suffering of God waited," as in the days of Noah, and because "judgment was not speedily executed" men ceased to believe in retribution. A parallel only on a cosmic instead of limited Palestinian scale is found in our own age. Nothing can be at once more simple, direct and awful than the testimony of scripture to the dread alternative of neglecting or rejecting the offered grace of God. The Lamb's book of life or the lake of fire—these are the only two possible ultimate destinies. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John iii: 36).

And what we need to see is that the inevitableness of eternal separation from God of those who do not believe, desire or love God, rests not upon some arbitrary decree, but upon the eternal and indestructible distinctions between good and evil, faith and doubt, love and hatred. "He loved cursing, so let it be unto him; he hated blessing, so let it be far from him," is God's sorrowful assent to man's deliberate choice.

ASA'S GOOD REIGN.

(2 Chr. xiv: 1-12.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *Asa's reforms* (verses 1-7; see below).

2. *The Secret of Asa's Victory* (verses 8-12). Asa's beautiful prayer is good for all dispensations, for it deals with the great permanent factors of man's need and weakness and the strength of God. Note that it is not a prayer of despair, but the confident petition of a heart that "rests" (verse 11) on God.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

As not infrequently happens, we must go outside the lesson to find its deepest truth. Our lesson records the activities of Asa in the things of God, but a little word concerning this king in another book of the Bible gives the secret of his power to do the Lord's work: "Nevertheless, Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord all his days." Reading *that* we no longer wonder that the idol houses came down and walls of defense went up. The real causes of things are often hidden from the world.

When loving hands prepared Martin Luther's body for the grave it was found that his knees were calloused from his hours of unceasing prayer. The world saw Martin Luther nailing the immortal theses to the church door, and heard him thundering from pulpit and printing press against the iniquities of Rome. The Lord saw on his knees a humble man whose "heart was perfect with the Lord all his life."

And any man, king or peasant, scholar or unlearned, great or small, whose heart is perfect with the Lord will be owned

and used of the Lord. What, then is it to have a heart perfect with the Lord? It is not to be sinlessly perfect in life, nor absolutely flawless in obedience, for Asa was neither. Not all of the high places were removed; and Asa gave the Lord's treasure to Ben-hadad (1 Kings xv: 14, 18). And yet the Word of God expressly says that "Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord."

That heart is perfect with the Lord which, in all sincerity of desire and intent, longs to do and permit to be done the will of God. Such a man will not be perfect, but he will long to be, and will mourn when he is not. He has enthroned the will of God as the supreme object of his desire. But he lives his life in the presence of three hindering forces.

First of all his hinderances is himself as he is by nature. He is not in the flesh as to standing (Rom. viii: 9), but the flesh is in him, and the old self will is a vigilant seeker after the throne from which it has been cast down.

Secondly, the man whose heart is right with God lives his life in a vast world-system of which Satan is the veiled prince (John xiv: 30) and god (2 Cor. iv: 4). It spreads before the man of God its kingdom of pleasure; of profit and of power.

And, finally, such a man is hated of Satan, and the principalities and powers of evil are arrayed against him. Doubtless the divine provision for his threefold need is ample (Gal. v: 16, 17); Eph. vi: 10-13), but doubtless, too, the man of God, to his shame and sorrow, before God will again and again come short of absolute perfection. But he will make no weak excuses for his failures, judging them honestly before God, and such a man God will surely use.

JEHOSHAPHAT'S REFORM.

(2 Chr. xix: 1-11.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The king's sin laid bare* (verses 1-3). It is easy to forget that our God, all gracious though He be, must ever deal in exact righteousness. He can be merciful to us because on the cross every demand of His holy government has been met.

2. *The fruits of righteousness* (verses 4-11). He is a lovely illustration of 1 John iii: 7, "My little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous." Doing never makes us righteous, but when by faith we have been made righteous (Rom. iii: 21-26; 2 Cor. v: 21), the fruit of righteousness must follow.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

Here is a lesson in the restoration to the divine favor and the divine service of a sinning saint. It is worth our while to look a little closely at what is before us.

First of all, are we sure that, apart from the stern rebuke of God's seer, we should have noticed that Jehoshaphat had sinned? Suppose the record had informed us of the fact merely that Jehoshaphat had "joined affinity" with Ahab? "Doubtless it was a wise thing to do." For there is a strange tendency to venerate Bible good men unduly. The Bible does not, but shows them as they were, men of like passions with ourselves (James v: 17), but, as to the trend and chief tenor of their lives, devoted heart and soul to the Lord. So of the writers of Scripture; they were fallible *men*—Peter dissembled at Antioch, and Paul shaved his head at Jerusalem—but they wrote in the words which the

Holy Spirit taught (1 Cor. ii: 3), and so gave us infallible *Scriptures.*

Jehoshaphat did evil in "joining affinity" with the wicked and idolatrous Ahab, but when the Word of God by the prophet John came to him he bowed under its authority, "prepared his heart to seek the Lord," and then went forth in renewed strength to do a great work for God.

What a lesson of hope is this for a sinning saint! Surely it is a needed word, for there is a tendency to despair, if not of restoration to communion, at least of restoration to service, in the heart of a child of God who has failed in obedience. And he will find in the religious literature of the day enough to confirm his fears. A very common and widespread opinion finds expression in the verses everywhere said or sung about a bird with a broken wing who could never fly very high again. Out upon such unbiblical bosh! Peter did his very best flying after his wing was broken that awful night of his denial. It was *he,* not John or James, who could say to all Israel: *"Ye* denied the Holy One."

We are not told what heart searchings before God Jehoshaphat had under the prophet's rebuke. We do not know what passed between the Lord and Peter in their first interview after the resurrection (1 Cor. xv: 5; Luke xxiv: 34), but we do see the Hebrew king doing valiantly for God in his kingdom; and we do see Peter winning souls in Jerusalem and writing of the "precious" things of Christ.

In one such case, that of David's, we are shown the whole method of restoration. When Nathan brought home to David the great and awful sin of his life, he uttered the fifty-first Psalm. That Psalm is the highway over which any sinning servant of God may pass once more into the presence of the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Its steps

are: Confession, cleansing, restoration of joy and power, service, worship, communion (Psa. li; 1 John i:9).

JOASH, THE BOY KING.

(2 Kings xi:1-16.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Reign of Athaliah* (verse 1).—The annals of human wickedness contain no record more evil than this, for Athaliah destroyed her own grandchildren. How brief the record, how awful the deed!

2. *God's Promise Cannot Fail* (verses 2, 3).—See Heart of the Lesson.

3. *The Wise Measures of Jehoiada* (verses 4-12).—The guidance of God is by His Spirit, and He is the Spirit "of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. i:7). All these attributes are manifest in Jehoiada's actions toward Joash.

4. *The Fate of Athaliah* (verses 13-16).—It should be remembered in reference to all such instances of retribution as this in the Old Testament, that they are not *massacres* but *executions,* in accordance with Gen. ix:6.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The immutability of God's covenants is, of course, the outstanding truth of this lesson. More than a century and a half before the birth of Joash, Jehovah had entered into a voluntary, unconditional covenant with the great ancestor of Joash, King David, by which He pledges Himself to give to David an undying posterity, an unending kingdom (2 Sam. vii:7-14). In the 89th Psalm Jehovah confirmed

that covenant by an oath. One proviso was made: If David's posterity should become disobedient or apostate, then Jehovah would "visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes" (Psa. lxxxix: 28-36); but even here He is careful to add, "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips."

This covenant becomes the great theme of the prophets. Isaiah tells us that Jerusalem will be the capital of the promised kingdom, and that the final King, born of a virgin, will be "Immanuel," "the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace." And, lest this should be interpreted as of some so-called "spiritual" and invisible kingdom, he is careful to tell us that it shall be "upon the throne of David" (Isa. ii: 1-3; vii: 13-14; ix: 6-8).

Jeremiah takes up the theme: "The days are come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and justice *in the earth;*" and he adds a detail of the establishment of the kingdom which is never afterwards lacking —the promise of the restoration of Israel to their own land (Jer. xxiii: 3-8; Ezk. xxxvii: 21-25). See, also, Hos. iii: 4-5; Joel ii: 1-7; Luke i: 26-33; Acts xv: 14-17). The promised chastisement has fallen upon the Davidic family; the ultimate Heir has appeared, been rejected, crucified, and raised from the dead, and is coming again to sit on the throne of His father David.

So much by way of explanation. Now read the history of the kings of Judah, descendants of David, in the light of Satan's endeavors to frustrate the covenant. King after king was led into disobedience and apostasy; and now, through Athaliah, the Adversary seeks to exterminate the royal seed. Well he knew that if that were done he need no longer dread the Head-Bruiser of Gen. iii: 15. Almost

he succeeds, but Joash was saved. Again, when the final Heir appeared Satan seemed to have succeeded, for during three days and nights the Son of David lay dead. But God had resurrection in reserve.

JOASH REPAIRS THE TEMPLE.

(2 Kings xii: 4-15.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Failure of the Priests* (verses 4-6).—It appears from verses 7 and 8 that the money brought to the temple under the varied requirements of the law had been appropriated by the priests, and not expended upon the repairs of the temple.

2. *The Temple Repaired* (verses 7-15).—This division calls for no comment. Jehoiada, with that practical wisdom which he manifested in the dethronement and execution of Athaliah, and the enthronement of Joash, took measures to secure the temple revenues for the repair of the temple.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

Every revival in Israel centered itself upon the temple. The first thought of a good king, especially in the first flush of his faith and gratitude, was for the restoration of the honor and authority of Jehovah, of which the temple and its rituals were the manifestation. The temple, too, was the token of the unity of Israel. In no other place could the offerings under the law be brought; nowhere else could Jehovah's priests lawfully minister; nowhere else were the ark of the covenant and the shekinah glory.

It was inevitable, therefore, that a truly spiritual revival

should be first of all solicitous for the temple, God's earthly abiding place. Any movement, for example, which sought only to bring one tribe back from a low to a high state of obedience, ignoring the eleven tribes, would have been infinitely below the Spirit's level—even though calling itself a revival, it would have been clannish, sectarian, divisive. The revival under Elijah may seem to form an exception, but really establishes the rule, for (1) the temple was in the power of Ahab and Jezebel, and, (2) when Elijah repaired the altar of the Lord on Carmel—an old altar antedating the temple—"he took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob." Of the tribes ten were wholly unrepresented, but a prophet of Jehovah could not ignore the unity of Israel, of which temple and altar were the token.

And all this is typical, as we learn from Eph. ii: 19-22, of the church, which "groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.....builded together for an habitation of God through the spirit." Thank God, *that* temple can never have "breaches" nor fall into ruin (Matt. xvi: 18); but the greater part of our modern talking and modern working for what we are pleased to call revivals, wholly ignores the temple. The sense of the unity of the one body is gone, together with the yearning for blessing for every member of that body—every living stone in that temple. In the multiplicity of sects we have lost the vision of the unity. We need a renewal of that vision, and with it a yearning for a revival of holiness and of power which shall hold in its longing not man-made sects, but God-made saints.

ISAIAH'S MESSAGE TO JUDAH.

(Isa. i: 1-9, 16-20.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Condition of Judah* (verses 1-4).—This is a cry out of the heart of God; His children have rebelled; they are more brutish than the ox or the ass.

2. *The Failure of Chastisement* (verses 1-8).—That great charge to Israel, Deut. xxvii-xxix, holds a warning that if the people should become disobedient and apostate, increasingly severe chastisements should fall upon them *in the land* (Deut. xxix: 22-25); and that, failing these, the people should be cast out of the land (verses 26-28). Isaiah announces the failure of the chastisements to restore Judah; there remains only dispersion.

3. *The Mention of the Remnant* (verse 9).—The doctrine of the remnant is one of the most important in Scripture. There is always in Israel a remnant, as in the church there are always some who are of the Philadelphian spirit (Rev. iii: 8) and whether in Israel or the church, God's fellowship and testimony are always with the remnant.

4. *The Offer of Mercy* (verses 16-20).—Before resorting to the terrible judgment of dispersion God sends tender appeals. Even in their depth of iniquity He will save. See 2 Chron. xxxvi: 15-17.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

Neither the disclosure of the heart of God in verses 2 and 3, nor of the compassion of God in verses 16-20, wonderful as these are, can be considered the distinctive truths of this lesson, because these two revelations of God are everywhere, from Genesis to Revelation. Never do we weary of them;

never do we get beyond the need of being reminded that our sins afflict the Father's heart, nor beyond the need of assurance that for the greatest of those sins pardon and cleansing may be found in the sacrifice provided by the Father's love.

But in verse 18 something is said concerning our sins which is wholly lost sight of in our common way of dealing with that text. We read it as if it said: "Though your sins be as scarlet," *you* "shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson" *you* "shall be as wool"; but that is not what is said. It is the scarlet *sins* which are to be white; the crimson *sins* which are to be as wool. Is not here something which should arrest our attention? Have we not here, if only we may come at it, the heart of this lesson?

But, we ask, how can sin be anything but sin, loathsome, guilty, abhorred of God? A thousand times let it be repeated—sin as sin can never be anything else. But the divine thought here seems to go back of the act into origins. This is our Lord's way in that most searching of all scriptures—the very point of the two-edged sword—the Sermon on the Mount; the guilt is there in all its unspeakable vileness—only it is traced back to its origin.

But the sex instinct is not evil; it is holy and good. Upon it God has built the holiest thing on earth, the family. About it cluster the sacredest, sweetest words. Husband, wife, father, mother, brother, sister, child, home. And, by as much as the instinct is pure and ineffably beautiful, by so much is its perversion the most infernal and loathsome of all the sins possible to man.

But suppose the redemptive processes, tracing a hateful sin back to its origin the instinct perverted, degraded, fallen, propose to preserve the instinct, the foundation of all social

order and of all manliness and womanliness, but to free it absolutely from evil? to make it as white as snow?

Take, again, the capacity for forming moral judgments. That capacity implies the capacity for wrath, for noble indignation. That capacity inheres in God Himself. But, fallen, degraded, perverted and centered on self, wrath murders. Suppose God has lodged in the blood of Christ and in the power of the Spirit power to preserve wrath, but to make it like wool—the wrath of the Lamb!

And so with all the primal instincts. And the wonderful heart of this lesson is that God in saving us does not dehumanize, but rather rehumanizes us.

JOSIAH'S GOOD REIGN.

(2 Chron. xxxiv: 1-13.)

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The beautiful sequence in verse 3, opens to us the heart of this lesson. A young man of sixteen—for maturity comes early to kings—Josiah "began to seek after the God of David his father; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem." The result and the cause have the inevitability of a law of nature. Whoever, king or peasant, begins to seek after God, and keeps it up for years, as Josiah did, will begin to do things. God fills the seeking soul with Himself, and the God-possessed soul cannot rest in a world packed with evil. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," said Christ.

Josiah begins right. "In the beginning God," is the sublime opening sentence of holy writ; and in the final sifting

it will be found that all great work for humanity began, not with humanity but with God.

As the young king went on seeking after the God of David his father, and as each discovery in the shoreless ocean of the Infinite One's wisdom, love and power stimulated him to yet closer, deeper seeking, he began to see that *only* God counts, *only* God matters; and that the quality of sin which makes it horrible and intolerable is that it insults and grieves God.

Josiah may well have pondered a great saying of his ancestor David in that wonderful penitential psalm, the cry of a heart broken by the revelation of its own evil; "against Thee, Thee only have I sinned." What! had he not sinned against his good soldier Uriah and against his sister woman Bathsheba? Oh, yes—in a secondary sense, but the essence of his sin was that in corrupting Bathsheba, and in compassing the murder of Uriah, he had dared to lift his hand against a man and a woman whom *God* had made.

And in his four years' quest of the God of David he would inevitably come to see why idolatry is the first and greatest of sins just because it displaces God from the soul and usurps His throne in heart and life.

Our world, like Josiah's Jerusalem, is full of high places and altars of Baalim, and there is sore need that one arise with power to cast them down and break them in pieces. Covetousness is idolatry, and never was Mammon so worshipped as now, and never did the altars of Baalim in Jerusalem smoke with such sacrifices as are cast on Mammon's altars in America. The current revelations tell the awful tale. Honor, virtue, happiness, benevolence, love and life are the sacrifices freely offered to that Mammon whom Milton called, "The least erected fiend that fell."

And many friends of humanity perceive this, and there

is much casting about for the remedy. Doubtless in Jerusalem many true lovers of God mourned the all but universal apostasy around them, and considered how Judah and Jerusalem might be purged—and all the time a young man in Jerusalem was thinking about *God,* and seeking *God.* And when God had grown so great to him that all life had significance because of its relation to God, and all human affairs were of importance because humanity is God's—then he saw the high places and the altars of Baalim and smote them down.

The Puritans, despite their curious and grotesque travesty of Christianity, had a great conception of God in His holiness and majesty, and because they were so filled with Him, the high places of evil in England went down.

The great need to-day is to seek after God.

JOSIAH AND THE BOOK OF THE LAW.

(2 Chron. xxxiv: 14-28.)

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

"The law is good if a man use it lawfully," and the lawful use of the law has a beautiful illustration in this lesson: "And it came to pass when the king had heard the words of the law that he rent his clothes"—the oriental gesture of despair. That gesture told better than words how conviction had, through the law, struck through the king's soul. It was as if he had said: "If *that* is the law of the Lord then am I undone, and my kingdom is undone."

And that is precisely the work of the law. Josiah might have expressed himself in the very words of Paul: "By the law is the knowledge of sin"; "I had not known sin, but by

the law"; "For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

For the law has but one language: *"What things soever* the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that *every* mouth may be stopped, and *all* the world become guilty before God." "For *as many* as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, cursed is every one that *continueth not* in *all* things which are written in the book of the law to do *them.*"

Perhaps the most serious and hopeless feature of the present condition is that the law has lost its cutting edge. And yet the law is the same, and its lawful use is the same. It would be more exact to say that the sword of the law is sheathed. It is still flourished, and many attempted thrusts are made with it, but no garments are rent, no one is guilty and undone because of it.

And the scabbard in which it has been sheathed and made harmless is the teaching—a survival in Protestantism of Roman theology—that the law is a rule of life, and not, as Paul says: "A ministration of death."

No one is cut down by the law because we are all hoping yet to keep it better. But the law never says: "Try again," to the sinner; it simply launches its curse; pronounces its sentence: "The soul that sinneth it shall die."

And we honor the law when we accept its righteous sentence, and turn to God for His mercy through Christ Jesus.

Nor is it the commandments only which we should read or hear with heart-searching and conviction. The Beatitudes afford an illustration of this. We preach sermons in praise of the beatitudes; we expound them, explaining what it means to be "poor in spirit," to "mourn," to be "meek," and so on. But why do we never say: "Woe is me because I am proud in spirit, self-satisfied, self-seeking, and so

wholly lacking this nine-fold blessedness?" In like manner we read the thirteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians, admiring it as if it were a mere poem. Or, if we go beyond literary admiration we only say: "How beautiful is this love of which Paul speaks," and never, or rarely, "Alas! how unlike am I to all this," going away to God in the secret place in brokenness of spirit—not because of this or that overt sin, so much as that our hearts are cold and hard and proud?

When Paul wrote the first letter to the Corinthians the effect of its faithful and tender rebukes and exhortations showed the work of the word in exercised consciences. "What carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal."

There is great need that we should cleanse our ways by taking heed thereunto according to His word.

JEHOIAKIM BURNS THE WORD OF GOD.

(Jer. xxxvi. 21-32.)

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

Two thoughts dominate this lesson: the indestructibility of the word of God, and the way men seek to destroy it. Incidentally, also, the inner reason why men *desire* to destroy the word of God is disclosed. In the present instance, "the roll of a book" which Jeremiah had dictated to Baruch, the scribe, contained "all the words" that Jehovah had spoken "against Israel and against Judah, and against all the nations"; and the roll of the words was written in the hope of Judah's repentance. "It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them;

that they may return every man from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin."

But Jehoiakim had no mind to accept humbly the rebuke of his sins, nor to forsake them. Perhaps he thought that by destroying the indictment he might escape the judgment.

And just there is the reason for all the attempts of men in all the ages to destroy the book of God. It testifies against the pride and evil of the human heart, and asserts the sovereign right of God to the implicit obedience, love and worship of all men.

In no other way is it possible to account for the ceaseless enmity which this one book alone of all the books in the world has encountered. Why else, should this one book be singled out for human hatred?

And observe: It is not so much the book itself which provokes the hatred of the human heart as the claim which it makes to be *authoritative*. Once concede that it is a human production, written along through the ages by a people "with a genius for religion"—as other people have a genius for art, or for invention—and the Bible, thus deprived of its divine authority, is tolerated. That is the distinctive note of present-day assaults upon the Scriptures.

And, secondly, the lesson discloses the *method* of the warfare against the Bible—by little and little. "And it came to pass that when Judah had written three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was upon the hearth."

Wholesale denunciations of the Bible are out of fashion. On the contrary, the modern Jehoiakim will say beautiful things about the Bible. He freely concedes to it the first place among the so-called "sacred books" of the nations, and affirms that in a greater degree than any of them it has "caught true concepts" from God.

But when this is said, then the penknife work begins. We must cut out the biblical conception of the being and character of God. He is not, the modern Jehoiakim says, capable of wrath, nor does he "punish" sin. Sin punishes itself. Therefore there is no hell, no eternal punishment.

We must, too, cut out the whole Bible conception of man as having been created upright and innocent—an innocency from which the first man fell. Man began as protoplasm or as a "primeval germ," and blundered up and is still blundering up.

That makes it necessary to cut out the Bible view of sin. Sin is only traces of the lower forms through which man has emerged—traces for which "he is no more responsible than a puppy is for its tendency to destroy things."

But, thirdly, the word of God is absolutely indestructible When Baruch's roll lay a heap of blackened ashes on Jehoiakim's hearth, the king imagined, no doubt, that the matter was ended; but—

"Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying: "Take thee again another roll and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll."

No: "The Scripture cannot be broken." "Forever is my word settled in the heavens." But the faith of millions in that word may be broken, and is being broken by the penknife work of Jehoiakim's successors.

JEREMIAH IN THE DUNGEON.

(Jer. xxxviii: 1-13.)

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The permitted affliction of the good is evidently the heart of things here. In a time of final declension and utter apostasy Jeremiah stands forth uttering in a blameless life the terrible messages of God. No braver, more devoted servant, save only Jesus Christ, did Jehovah ever have on this earth. And furthermore, the very point of his pleading with king and people was the power of God to deliver Judah even yet from all the power of Babylon if only Judah would return to Jehovah, her covenant God.

And, now, in the mystery of God's will, the very preacher of His power to deliver is not delivered! "Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison .....so Jeremiah sunk in the mire." Why?

We must remember that this case does not stand alone. Job, the best man of his time, is given over, as to all else but his life, into the hand of Satan. The three faithful Jews are cast into the burning fiery furnace. Daniel himself must go into the den of the lions. John the Baptist loses his head at the request of a lewd dancing girl. Stephen is stoned. Paul is beaten and imprisoned. All the apostles save John die by the executioner. Countless Christian maidens are torn by lions and devoured by flames. Why?

We may not go to the end of this mystery of the permitted suffering of the good, but we may go some way in it.

Think first of the cases illustrated by this instance of Jeremiah's—the cases which end in deliverance. In all of them three facts are clearly discernible.

First: The power of God is far more strikingly shown

in His deliverance of His servants from the trials into which they were permitted to be drawn, than it could have been in simply keeping them out of the trial. It was an amazing manifestation of the power of God that Shadrach and his companions were not hurt by the flames, nor Daniel by the lions. Jeremiah, mute and meek in his horrible miry pit, was an appeal to whatever of heart and conscience Judah had left.

Secondly: We cannot doubt that for them there was great gain. Not always do the narratives show this, but they show it often enough to make us sure that suffering, unjustly inflicted, meekly borne, is always a process of blessing.

Cleansing and a resultant nearness to God are invariable. In the burning, fiery furnace the three men of the captivity were seen walking, their bonds burnt away, but not even their garments hurt, while with them was the ineffable presence of "the Fourth."

Job, good, but too conscious of it, was brought to see God, and in the light of that vision to see also and to abhor himself.

Thirdy: The permitted suffering of the Saints often turns out to the furtherance of the Gospel, and to their greater efficiency. Job, purified, becomes the priest through whom his accusing friends are pardoned. Aged John, exiled to Patmos, is given the Apocalypse to write. There are mysteries, but we do know

> "'Tis suffering sublimes the soul,
> So perfect peace may come at last,
> And we shall know God's kind intent
> When these sharp pains are past."

But of the undelivered, what shall we say? To what end the murder of John the Baptist, the stoning of Stephen, the cruel deaths of the unnumbered martyrs?

Let us remember that there are two spheres of life to be taken into account. When earth's last word is said, eternity's first word is uttered. Never, until we pass, "To where, beyond these voices there is peace," shall we know the other side of agony and death of the good; but this at least faith confidently affirms—that everything which seems hardest in the permitted suffering of the good, will some time be seen to be God's sweetest touch of love.

MANASSEH'S SIN AND REPENTANCE.

(2 Chron. xxxiii: 1-13.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *Manasseh's life-record* (verses 1, 2).
2. *The king's great sin* (verses 3-10).
3. *Manasseh's terrible punishment* (verse 11). The king's repentance and restoration.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The core of the matter in this lesson is in the twelfth verse: "And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers." Two things followed Manasseh's humbling: he got an answer to his prayer, and he got really acquainted with God.

Put, as you truly may, into the word affliction all the meanings of those other words of Scripture, "chastening," "tribulation," and "purging," and think of these experiences not

as the accidents and mere chances of the believer's life, but as the sent experiences of the Father's disciplinary dealing, every one a deliberate plan; every one fitted with exquisite skill to the effecting of a certain object; every one held steadily in the Father's hand with His loving faithful finger on the pulse of His child—think of the word affliction that way, and you are in the very heart, not alone of this Sunday school lesson, but of the deepest mysteries of Christian experience.

Manasseh's great ancestor and covenant head, king David, said, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted;" never once does he say, "It is good for me that I have been exalted." David poor, cast out, hunted like a partridge on the mountains of Israel was always a humble, hopeful, holy David. But David on a throne, rich, idle, overfed, was a David ready for any sensuality, any cruelty.

Why are the good afflicted? That problem is as old as Job, and not much has been added to the solution of the problem since Job. It is all answered there at last.

And perhaps the sorest trial of the afflicted is still that to him comes Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamanite, with their little self-righteous theories about the affliction of the good. The affliction itself is hard, but it is as a bed of down compared to Eliphaz and Bildad and Zophar. But these, too, must be borne.

Paul calls affliction "tribulation," from the Roman threshing implement. And that means more than that it falls like the blows of a flail. It means that under the blows chaff gets separated from wheat. Paul tells us that the justified man, who has peace with God, and stands in God's grace, and rejoices in the hope of God's glory, comes under the flail and to what end.

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: know-

ing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope."

Some one has beautifully said that "Tribulation is God's way with us, sometimes; and patience is just letting God have His way; and experience is finding out that God's way was best."

Our Lord calls it "purging"; and He, too, tells us what it is good for. "Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." And the word means both cleansing and pruning. The tendrils reach out after forbidden, or at least unwise things, and the Husbandman severs the outreaching tendril. But the great autumn clusters make it well worth while.

The writer of the Hebrews calls it "chastening," and he, too, tells us why the good are afflicted. It is "for our profit that we might be partakers of His holiness." And he says that though, "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

So Manasseh's affliction was his exceeding great blessing.

OMRI AND AHAB.

(1 Kings xvi: 23-33.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *God's judgment of prosperous evil* (verses 23-27; see below).

2. *The greater wickedness of Ahab* (verses 28-33); see below).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

In the first of our lesson the story of Omri, the deepest meaning is to be found in the contrast between God's judgment and man's. The contrast does not so much appear from the portion selected as from all that is said in Scripture of Omri. And yet enough is here.

From the human standpoint Omri's reign was brilliant and successful. In the judgment of men he was no doubt regarded as a constructive statesman. He was, in a sense, the Peter the Great of his time. Beginning in Tioga, as Peter in Moscow, he built a new capital city as Peter built St. Petersburg. Such a man would do other notable things. The "rest" of his acts, it appears, were recorded in the "chronicles of the kings of Israel," and the record has perished. We may imagine that a man so strong and aggressive would fill a large place in that chronicle.

But all the time a different chronicle was being written in heaven. Here it is only said that "he wrought evil in the sight of the Lord." What that evil was will appear in the great day when the "dead" shall be judged (Rev. xx: 11, 12). In the days of Noah it was just the same. "There were giants in the earth in those days," "mighty men, men of renown." They builded, they bought and sold. Then, as now, the great "captains of industry" were flattered and envied. Never were earth's prospects more fair; never was there less apparent justification for forebodings. But just at that very time "*God* saw that the *wickedness* of man was great in the earth." Never before have those days been more exactly paralleled than just now, and it may be well to remember that it is one of the sure signs of the coming of the Lord.

The one fact concerning Ahab upon which Scripture puts

most emphasis is the fact of his bad marriage. It was not a bad marriage according to the ethics of the world. It was good politics for young Ahab to marry the daughter of the king who largely controlled his access to the sea. And, because Ahab was young and an oriental despot, we may be sure that Jezebel was as beautiful in person as she certainly was brilliant in mind and determined in character.

But that woman was Ahab's evil genius, and every wife is either the best or the worst element in her husband's life. Marriage, an institution divinely established in humanity, is precisely that human relationship which Scripture most sternly safeguards. Great as is the emphasis which the Bible puts upon parenthood, that holy relation is subordinated to marriage. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife."

Designed by divine love to afford both the highest happiness and the purest pleasure to humanity, it is, if misused, the most awful of life's curses. And no other human relationship is more vilely misused.

The recurring agitations for improved divorce laws are folly. No amendment of these could cure or even touch the real evil. Not easy divorce, but easy marriage, is the true crime. Never until Christians are taught the great and sacred meanings of marriage, so that the conscience will become more sensitive, if possible, to wrong marriage than to murder itself, will the great evil and sorrow of the social life of humanity disappear.

GOD TAKING CARE OF ELIJAH.

(1 Kings xvii: 1-16.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *Elijah's Faith in a Living God* (verse 1).—How much modern faith is in a God who *once* lived and acted sovereignly, rather than in the Lord God who *now* lives and acts sovereignly. It took, not *more* than ordinary faith, but *real* faith, to say to a wicked king:—"There shall not be"—confident that it should not be, because back of Elijah was the "Lord God of Israel" that "liveth."

2. *God's Resources Unlimited to a Faith Harnessed to Obedience* (verses 2-16).—Divine guidance as to the "eastward," and "by the brook Cherith that is before Jordan," is not to be relegated to a former dispensation, but is to-day at the command of the weakest child of God. However, the path of obedience has many side-tracks, and a turn to the right or to the left may so switch one off the line of guidance as to impede progress. But of this we may be certain, that at God's *"there"* is everything needed for our development and welfare. His way, however, is not always along a direct route, for we, too, sometimes, "must needs go through Samaria."

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

I think we must find the heart of this lesson in a word which we may easily pass over unnoticed. It is the word "there," in verses 4 and 9: "I have commanded the ravens to feed thee *there"*; "I have commanded a widow woman *there* to sustain thee."

Suppose Elijah, having such a command, had said: "Of course the Lord does not care especially that the brook by

which I am to live should be the brook *Cherith.* That would be to interpret His word after the manner of the literalists, in a hard, mechanical way. A brook is meant, not any particular brook, and I know a far pleasanter brookside in my own country of Gilead; I will go *there.*" Does any one imagine that God's ravens, who seem to have been very exact literalists, would have gone elsewhere than to Cherith?

Or suppose he had chosen another city than Zarephath, or another house in Zarephath than that of the widow, would he have been on claiming ground in respect of God's promise? Clearly not.

The thought is that our heavenly Father has, for every one of His children, a life plan which of necessity extends to the minutest detail. Of necessity, because no act or thought in human life is unrelated or detached, but is intimately connected with every other act or thought. There were reasons in the divine choice of Cherith and the ravens. and of Zarephath and the widow, even though the reasons were not disclosed.

By the brook the prophet himself was disciplined for the greater tasks before him. What a lesson in patient obedience was his life by that slowly drying stream! Day by day the brook shrank in its channel until at last no water remained. Most of us would have taken that as a sufficient indication of the divine providence, and, like Obadiah, would have gone elsewhere looking for a more abundant supply. Not so Elijah. Not till the word of command came again, did the prophet move. How unlike very many of us! It seems never to occur to us that we may need the discipline of constantly diminishing resources. And thousands of God's dear children are in straits, and have little token of the Father's care, because they have chosen the "there" of their lives in self-will and self-pleasing.

Elijah himself committed that error later in his ministry, and for once in the life of that great prophet "the word of the Lord" came to him with an accent of rebuke: "What doest thou *here,* Elijah?" (1 Kings xix: 9). It might be the beginning of better, larger things to many troubled Christians if they would set themselves earnestly to seek the will of God as to the "here" and "there" of their lives.

OBADIAH AND ELIJAH.

(1 Kings xviii: 1-16.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *God's "Go" Precedes His "And I Will"* (verses 1, 2). —This is seen also in the previous lesson. If God were a despot, as some men assert, His Word would be full of "go's," with no "and I will." A human monarch launches out a good many go's, but instead of *and,* he offers an *or.* In other words, the laws of the land are all attached to penalties, not to rewards. The laws of heaven are all attached to gracious promises. How much fallacious teaching along these lines has implanted in many a heart an unbiblical idea of God, our loving heavenly Father.

2. *Secret Discipleship* (verses 3-15).

3. *The Lord and His Hosts Elijah's Cohort* (verses 15, 16).—Elijah had no fear for his life, as Obadiah had, for unlike the latter, his faith, as in the previous lesson, was in a living God with unseen hosts at His command, and the outflow of such a faith is always an upright life, free from the fear of men. Oh for more men like Elijah to say in the face of danger,—of ridicule—of temptation—"the Lord"..... "before whom I stand."

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

These two prophets of Jehovah in a day of apostasy and idolatry in Israel are not only strongly contrasted characters, but are representative of two classes of servants of God in every age. Both were sincere, both had the prophetic gift. But there the similarity ends and contrast begins.

Obadiah is a type of the Christian minister who sincerely loves the Lord, and who, within certain limitations, means to be loyal and true. But he cannot break with the world. Obadiah held an important office at the court of the vilest king who ever disgraced a throne. That court was dominated by Jezebel, a cruel idolater whose name has become in Scripture a symbol of persecution and corruption (Rev. ii: 20). In that court the open confession of the name of Jehovah was impossible. When Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord (verse 13) it is evident that Obadiah was not suspected. On the other hand he evinced the reality of his secret discipleship by sheltering and sustaining an hundred of his fellow believers. But he could not give up his place of favor with its emoluments and influence, and take his place openly with God's fearless witnesses against evil in high places. A Jewish tradition asserts that when Jezebel caused the torture and death of the prophets of Jehovah, many who were unknown and unsuspected came forward to suffer with their brethren; and Saphir thought these were meant in Heb. xi: 35, "not accepting deliverance," when Obadiah offered to secrete them. Such, then, was Obadiah —a man of sincere faith, but a truckling time-server, suppressing his profound convictions, and having no word of rebuke for the shameless idolatry about him.

What a contrast to all this is Elijah. Into that very court where Obadiah was selling his manhood and betraying his God through cowardice and ambition, came this stranger

from Gilead with his stern message of the divine wrath and judgment. How Obadiah must have longed for courage to cast off his livery of shame and stand forth at whatever cost, as Elijah's co-witness. But he could not—he had sold his manhood for place and power.

What a day, too, of contrast between the religious worldling and the separated servant of God was that which followed this meeting of Obadiah and Elijah, when all Israel was gathered to Carmel for the contest between the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and Jehovah's one fearless witness.

The "governor" of Ahab's court (verse 3) must have perceived that the real monarch that day was not the Jezebel-ruled Ahab, but the solitary Tishbite.

Such a contrast recurred in the morning of the Reformation between Erasmus and Luther. The satirical scholar was as little of a papist as the converted monk, but when Luther was delivering his shattering blows upon the citadel of the later Jezebel, he in vain summoned to his side the one man in all the world who could have helped him most. The same contrast recurs when, as to-day, there stand in the same age and with like convictions men who dare strike hard and straight at the monstrous covetousness which underlies every colossal fortune, every crushing trust, and the men who stand daily in the presence of the modern Ahabs, knowing well that they have taken the vineyard of many a helpless Naboth, but with craven hearts speak smooth things.

And the peculiar peril of all men of that type is, that they salve their consciences with some good deed which their position of favor with the world enables them to do. Have they not induced Crœsus to found an orphanage, or endow a Christless college?

ELIJAH ON MOUNT CARMEL.

(1 Kings xviii: 30-46.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Recognition of Israel's Unity* (verses 30-32).

God has gathered two bodies on this earth, both charged with the duty of representing Himself—Israel and the church. The first great fact concerning the Deity is unity: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord," and the point of most grievous failure in both cases is, that divisions came in to mar the expression of that unity. The two kingdoms in Israel, and the numberless sects in the church mark that failure. Elijah here finely illustrates the individual part in a time of division. He took no position which ignored the entire unity of the people of God.

2. *The Courage and Composure of True Faith* (verses 33-36).

So sure was Elijah that the power of his God was sufficient, that he deliberately heaped difficulty upon difficulty, and then, in the quietness of a heart stayed on Jehovah, he waited for the time of the evening sacrifice.

3. *The Prayer of Elijah and God's Answer* (verses 36-39).

This prayer is one of the most admirable models of prayer to be found in the Bible—that treasury of wonderful prayers. It is based on God's covenants; has the exaltation of God and the salvation of His people for its object.

4. *The Execution of the False Prophets* (verse 40).

Do not conceive of this scene as the triumph of bigotry. The government of Israel was a theocracy, and idolatry was the supreme treason against the King.

5. *The Final Test of Faith* (verses 41-46).

The justification of Elijah as God's true prophet was incomplete till rain should come again. Israel, however temporary the repentance might be, had that day turned back to God, and now it was His time to be gracious.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The heart of things here is not far to seek. It is the lesson taught in Scripture again and again, that the religion of the Bible is absolutely exclusive of all other religions.

Neither Christianity nor Mosaism can be put into a pantheon. When the ark of God was set up in the house of Dagon, they of Ashdod found the fish-god on his face with head and hands gone. In Ahab's day, as in our day, men supposed they might worship both Jehovah and Baal. Men in high place in the Christian church to-day are telling us that we must reconstruct our missionary ideals and methods, and recognize the many excellent things in the heathen religions as giving a common ground upon which to build the better things of Christianity. "A great vantage ground would be gained were missionaries to see that idols were in the beginning mere symbols, and to lead the people back from the idol to the truth symbolized." Indeed, we are told that it is an insult to call such cultured people as the Hindu and Chinese "heathen."

But Scripture knows nothing of this false "breath." "If Jehovah be God, follow Him, but if Baal, then follow him." "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent." "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." "Ye turneth to God from idols to

serve the living and the true God." "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

It is significant that when Jesus Christ, bringing in the new dispensation in which we live, reaffirmed the old exclusiveness, He spoke not of Baal nor of any of the old false gods, but of the false gods whom He foresaw as in a peculiar sense the symbol of Satan as the god of this age—mammon. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." In nothing is the contrast between the Jewish age and the Christian age more marked than in the new attitude toward wealth. Under the old order, wealth was a token of the divine blessing, and when Jesus said: "How hardly shall those that have riches enter the kingdom of God," the Jews exclaimed in amazement: "Who then can be saved?"

As in ancient Israel men imagined that, notwithstanding the express words of the law, they might keep well with Baal and with Jehovah also, so no professing Christians imagine that they may serve both God and mammon. And precisely there, in the frantic pursuit, by millions of professing Christians, of wealth as an object of life, may be found the open secret of the present powerlessness of the churches. The churches of one of the leading denominations in Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa, actually shrunk numerically last year; and similar ominous signs are accumulating all round the horizon. But the members of those churches are as moral and decent in their lives as ever. No charge is made that they have gone off into flagrant vice. No, they are making the most of the present "era of prosperity"; that is all. And that is a respectable sin which the pulpit does not feel itself called upon to rebuke. A dying millionaire, in a southwestern city, sent for his pastor. "Why," said the dying man, "did you never warn me of the sin of making wealth my pursuit?" "Because," answered

the minister, "I do not think it a sin to seek wealth." "Then I beg of you, study the word covetousness in your New Testament," said the dying man: "I have been an idolater all my life."

ELIJAH DISCOURAGED.

(1 Kings xix: 1-8.)

I. The Analysis.

This touching story does not yield to rigid analysis. In the heart of the lesson (see below) its central spiritual theme is discussed.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The lesson for to-day, like Peter's denial, and Jacob's subterfuge, and David's sin, furnished a theme for endless sermonic moralizings, mostly of the self-complacent sort. One would fain raise a voice of protest against this misuse of great names by small men. But it would be useless! The dealers in pious platitudes find the occasions too tempting.

The old Puritan preachers, who certainly had brains for better things, especially delighted to set up their pulpits beside Elijah's juniper tree. "Aha!" begins one of them, "And is this our bold denouncer of king's vices? Come out, come out, Elijah! Art thou afraid of a huzzy?"

All this is contemptible enough, and might be passed over without remark, if it had not become in a sense the settled attitude of the Christian mind toward this episode in the life of Elijah—an attitude which completely misses the true meaning, and blinds us to one of the sweetest lessons in the book of God.

The despondency of Elijah was natural enough. It was

the reaction from the intense nervous tension of nearly four years of tremendous service; and the heart of the lesson must be found in the Lord's attitude towards His overwrought servant.

It certainly is noteworthy that Jehovah did not say any of the things which so monotonously recur in commentaries and sermons. And when Elijah said that he had been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts, he said no more than the truth. When Paul writes at the end of his life, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," we do not accuse him of self-righteousness. And when Elijah said, "I, even I only, am left," he said what appeared to be the truth. Mr. Moody used to say that he would rather have been Elijah's little finger than all of the seven thousand secret disciples.

No, what Jehovah did was very tender and very beautiful. He first of all gave Elijah what a man suffering from nervous reaction most needs—sleep. "He giveth His beloved sleep"; and a beautiful gift it is. And then He sent an angel to cook Elijah's breakfast. In verse 7 it is "The angel of the Lord," and many understand that expression as always referring to the second Person of the Trinity. If so, then it means that Jehovah-Jesus Himself prepared food for His servant, as afterward by the lake in Galilee, He laid bread and fish on the coals for another company of discouraged disciples.

And then He gave the prophet sleep again, and when he awoke, once more gave him food. What tenderness, what motherliness fills the heart of God for His weary, overwrought, disheartened servants on earth! Again and again, in the sense of their failure and weakness they say: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers"—forgetting that the divine love and

compassion will not respond by judgment, but by tenderest acts of restoration and of comfort. Elijah's God had a better thing for him than death under a juniper tree in the wilderness. God knew, what Elijah did not, that one coming day He would lead His aged servant dry-shod across Jordan, and there meet him with "The chariot of the Lord and the horsemen thereof," thus to take him untouched of death, into the glory above.

ELIJAH ENCOURAGED.

(1 Kings xix: 9-18.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Interview in the Cave* (verses 9, 10).—Elijah was in the wrong place, but God sought him where he was. It reminds us of the first question in Scripture, the "Where art thou" of Gen. iii: 9. A God forsaking saint is not a God forsaken saint.

2. *The Interview on the Mount Before the Lord* (verses 11-14). (See below.)

3. *Elijah Again Brought into Service* (verses 15-18).—Elijah is not expelled from Jehovah's service, but is sent upon the highest of embassies. The Lord does not reject His servants because of their seasons of despondency.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The might of quietness—the truth that God's work is best done in the world when men have learned the way of the peaceful heart—that is evidently central in this lesson. The Lord was not in the wind, though it brake in pieces the rocks before Him; He was not in the earthquake, though it

shook Horeb like a reed; He was not in the fire, though it may have swept the mountain as with a besom of wrath. But He *was* in the still small voice.

Here is a message to this age of noise and clamor and lust for "power," and display of fleshly energy and wordy enthusiasm, and mighty conventions which proclaim that they are going to "take the world for Christ"—by committees! Elijah had been a man of the earthquake, the wind, and the fire. Perhaps there are times when such men must be, but God would not let Elijah pass from the scene without making it forever clear that such men and such methods are apart from His customary ways. His work is ever after the way of the building of Solomon's temple: "There was neither hammer, nor ax, nor any tool of iron, heard in the house while it was in building" (1 Kings vi: 7).

For no student of Scripture can doubt that the Lord is ever in the still small voice. What are the great prophetic messages? "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever." "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street." "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow up as the lily." "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord." Think of the great words of Jesus, the words most central in His message. They are rest, peace, joy. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." "These things have I spoken unto you that in me ye might have peace." And, as all know, these are Paul's great words, and John's.

And how blessed they are to the heart aweary of the hortatory whips and spurs under which God's dear servants

are driven in these days to that over-organized, overstrained thing which, as if in irony, is called "the Lord's work." Is it indeed the work of the Lord? Did the *Lord* hold shouting conventions, and multiply presidencies, and secretaryships, and committees? The true work of the Lord is done when restful and quiet hearts trust *Him* to work through them. "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how." The seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee unto Baal were Jehovah's converts, not Elijah's. Indeed, he did not know of their existence.

ELIJAH TAKEN UP INTO HEAVEN.

(2 Kings ii: 1-11.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Walk to Jordan* (verses 1-7).—The walks of Scripture would furnish material for a series of wonderfully helpful meditations. This is one of the most significant of them—the walk to power. The sons of the prophets make a poor figure here: they have knowledge (verse 5), but are utterly destitute of faith, and they seek to discourage the one earnest man in the land.

2. *The Crossing of Jordan* (verse 8).—As the Red Sea stands for Christ's death for us, so the crossing of Jordan signifies our death with Him (Rom. vi: 1-5) as the coming up out of Jordan speaks of resurrection life shared with Him.

3. *The Rapture of Elijah* (verses 9-11).—Elijah is here an illustration of the future rapture of the church (1 Thess. iv: 1-16).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

If we think of Elijah only, or even chiefly, the two great outstanding truths of this lesson are, first, that a Christian life—any Christian life—is a unity; it has a climax, but not anti-climax. If Elijah had died under the juniper tree, as he desired to do, that would have been indeed a sad anti-climax to a life so full of the whirlwind and of fire. And the other truth is that in the translation of Elijah we have at once a proof that death is not inevitable to the believer (1 Cor. xv: 51, 52), and that life survives the change from earth to heaven, for, centuries after, this same Elijah is with Christ in the Transfiguration.

But, dramatic as is the whole scene which the lesson brings before us, and central as is Elijah in that drama, I cannot but feel that we shall find the deeper and more abiding truths of the lesson in what is there said of Elisha. There is something most significant in the order of places along the line of Elisha's last walk with the elder prophet.

That fateful walk of Elijah to glory, and of Elisha to mighty power, follows an order which must, essentially, be reproduced in the experience of every child of God who enters into a vital experience of God's best. That walk began at Gilgal. The typical significance of Gilgal cannot be mistaken by any reader of Joshua. Gilgal was the place where a redeemed people rolled away "the reproach of Egypt" (Joshua v: 1-11). The reproach of Egypt was that there the Israelites had neglected circumcision, the divinely commanded sign of their separation as a people; and typically Gilgal stands for practical separation from the world, and unto God. We may say, therefore, that as a separated man, Elisha began the quest of power.

The next stage was Bethel, "house of God," the place of vision, of spiritual insight, for Bethel was the place where

Jehovah gave to Jacob the great ladder vision (Gen. xxviii: 11-19). To have tarried at Bethel would have been analogous to that satisfaction with mere knowledge of divine things—a snare to-day to thousands of the best instructed believers. No soul can thrive on the mere knowledge of positional truth. There is an experience corresponding to position, and he who would go into the fulness of Christian blessing must not be satisfied with being in the land, but must eat the old corn of that land—a Christ in glory. He must go on from Bethel to Jordan.

Jordan stands for the New Testament truth, "crucified with Christ." This truth, too, may be held as a mere Bible doctrine; but there is a making of that truth real in experience, a "receiving of the sentence of death in self," a "bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus" which is very different from merely reiterating a doctrine. There, on the resurrection side of Jordan, the gift of power awaited the prophet.

ISRAEL REPROVED.

(Amos v: 4-15.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *God Outside the Former Means of Blessing* (verses 1-6).—See below.

2. *The Resource of An Apostate People* (verses 7-10).—God always remains, no matter how deep the transgression, and the way back to Him is ever open.

3. *The Sins of Israel* (verses 11-15).—It is most striking that here we have enumerated the conspicuous sins of the present time.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The significant thing here is that God puts Himself outside the accustomed, time-honored and even divinely instituted places of blessing. Corrupt and iniquitous Israel is exhorted to "seek the Lord," but *not* at Bethel, Gilgal, nor Beersheba.

This is no new thing in the ways of God, nor is this by any means an isolated instance. The brazen serpent which had been so wonderfully used of God, instrumentally, in the wilderness (Numbers xxi: 8, 9), became, at last, a fetich to the people, and then to God "nehustan," a piece of brass (2 Kings xviii: 4). How solemnly and with what awful sanctions was Jerusalem set apart as the place where God had set His name, and where alone sacrifices and offerings might be made to Him. But, when the *place* rather than the God of the place became the sacred fact in the thought of the people, how easily was it said, "Woman believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father."

With what mighty promises Israel was set apart as God's portion, and with what minuteness of inspired detail was its ritual established, and yet, how summarily was it all swept aside when, as an instrument, it broke in the divine hand. The very religion which He had ordained became, without the change of a single form or ceremony, a mere "Jew's religion" (Gal. i: 13) in His eyes. "Let us therefor go forth unto Him without the camp," becomes the call to the faithful.

The application of this tremendous principle is obvious. The one vital question in any age is, Where is God *now?* Much has been made, is being made of the question, Which is the true church? But even if it could be demonstrated that, historically, this or that was the original church, such

demonstration would not go one step toward proving that God had not long ago spewed it out of His mouth as His representative. And if this be true of ancient churches having some claim to historic continuity from the apostles, how much more may it be true of our Protestant sects which are of yesterday?

The deeper truth is, of course, that whenever the sect, or the creed, or the form, becomes the sacred thing, the object of loyalty, so that we boast ourselves of being loyal to it, rather than to Him, it becomes "nehushtan."

It can scarcely be necessary to add that the reference to a search or the "true" church, is illustrative, merely. There never was a "true church," using that word in the modern sense of a church made up of a body of churches. The Bible knows nothing of such a "church." The Bible knows indeed of a church "which is His body, the fulness of Him which filleth all in all"; and it knows, too, of local churches, but not of an aggregation of local churches which compose a church.

The believer who has wandered from God may return to Him in confession any time, anywhere, and believers who seek His fellowship find Him ever with outstretched arms.

ELISHA SUCCEEDS ELIJAH.

(2 Kings ii: 12-22.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Condition Met* (verse 12).—Elijah had said that if Elisha saw him when he was taken up, the Spirit should come upon him as he had prayed.

2. *The Energy of Faith* (verses 13, 14).—True faith counts upon God's faithfulness. Nothing is said of any

peculiar feelings on Elisha's part. He had met a divine condition, and expected the answering power.

3. *The Barrenness of Knowledge Without Faith* (verses 15-18). See "Heart of Lesson."

4. *The Second Miracle* (verses 19-22).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

Many things in this wonderful lesson appeal for the place of primacy. The faith of Elisha is one of them. Possibly the Bible furnishes no instance of faith which surpasses this, save the faith of the repentant thief on the cross. When Elisha took up the fallen mantle of Elijah, and in the full view of the fifty doubting theological students on the other bank, smote the waters of Jordan, calling upon the Lord God of Elijah, he had absolutely no warrant for his faith but the word of the departed prophet of God that Spirit power should rest upon him if he met the condition: "If thou see me when I am taken from thee." He had met the condition, and his faith, resting upon the immutable word of God, expected the power to be manifested. Just at this point of expectancy thousands of believers fail today. Having complied with the biblical conditions of the filling with the Spirit, they halt and wait for feeling. It might be a very perilous thing for a servant of Christ to *feel* strong. Paul reminds the Corinthians that he was with them in weakness, fear, and much trembling, and that *just then* his preaching was in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Indeed, he expressed an habitual experience in the phrase, "When I am weak then am I strong."

Then, too, the sons of the prophets present a great temptation to a writer on this lesson. They present all the characteristics of machine-made prophets—characteristics repeated in every age. They had knowledge (2 Kings ii: 3),

but did not really believe the thing they knew. They knew that Elijah was to be taken that day, but they did not believe that he had been taken (2 Kings ii: 16-18); and they "bowed themselves to the ground" before a real prophet. Knowledge is good, and the prophets of God should have knowledge; but the man-made prophets and the God-made prophets differ just at the one point of triumphant, resistless faith. And faith is something the schools of the prophets are far more likely to destroy than to create, to impair than to strengthen.

But the effort in the writing of "The Heart of the Lesson" is to discover in each lesson the truth which is deepest, most formative. Examples of faith, and instances of knowledge without faith abound in Scripture, and are by no means peculiar to this lesson.

Is not the heart of things here to be found in the fact that the one eternal Spirit manifests Himself and His power so variously through different men? The same Spirit came upon the gentle Elisha, who had inspired and empowered the tempestuous Elijah. Two greatly precious conclusions follow. First, that the Spirit acts through, and not contrary to, the human personality. The method of inspiration illustrates this truth. Every book of the Bible is instinct with the distinctive personality of its writer. John does not write like Paul, nor Paul like Peter, nor Peter like Isaiah, yet all of them wrote in the very words given by the Holy Spirit. By personality is meant of course those qualities which make each human being to differ from all other human beings.

And the other lesson is that the work of God in the world requires an almost infinite variety of instrumentalities. When a Wesley, or a Spurgeon, or a Moody dies, the cry goes up to God for another like man, but the man whom

God sends is never another Wesley or Spurgeon or Moody. Let our cry to-day, when the need of a new voice of power is so great, not be "Where is Elijah?" but "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" Somewhere, be sure, He has ready our Elisha.

THE WIDOW'S OIL INCREASED.

(2 Kings iv: 1-7.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Cry of Need* (verse 1).—This widow and this widow's prophet alike believed that Jehovah would in some way show Himself the husband of the widow and the Father of the fatherless.

2. *The Divine Method of Supply* (verse 2).—See "The Heart of the Lesson."

3. *The Triumphant Answer to the Cry of Need* (verses 3-7).—There is always the mark of abundance upon God's answers. He is a great God, and does not bestow like a miser, but like a king.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The incident related in this lesson is in itself but one of the evidences of the power and love of God as shown in His providences, in which Scripture abounds. But there are certain details which clearly point toward great principles of the divine government, and these principles are permanent and therefore well worth our learning.

The first is that God begins with what we have. "Thine handmaid hath not anything in the house, save a pot of oil." But that pot of oil, plus the creative power of God, was

quite enough. It is the principle underlying the miracle of the loaves and fishes: "We have here but five loaves and two small fishes, but what are they among so many?" They were enough and more than enough, when Jesus had added to them His power. But the point is that He began with what the disciples had. Most Christian lives are, so far as human eye can see, barren and unfruitful. May it not well be largely because we are saying within ourselves that if only we had more time, or money, or capacity, or gift, we would do great things for God, while God is only asking that what we have shall be brought to Him to multiply?

A man once told Mr. Moody that he was asking God for money to care for five thousand orphans; and Mr. Moody said: "Friend, begin with one; you could take care of one, could you not? Well, find that one, and turn your home into an orphanage." Mr. Moody began the great Northfield Seminary in his own home, a plain New England farm house.

It is the old story of Moses protesting his lack of eloquence while all the time he held in his hand the old shepherd's crook which, cast down before God and then taken up again at God's command, became that "rod of God" with which Israel was delivered. It is the old story of Shamgar's ox goad, and Dorcas' needle.

There is the story of the winning of a great prize at a flower show by a poor woman who lived in an attic and had but one flower in a pot. But she tended that one flower and kept it in the sun, and watered it and fertilized it until it was more beautiful than any flower in any nobleman's conservatory. Every believer has some gift of the Spirit (1 Cor. xii: 7-27), and the Lord lays upon none of us any greater burden than just to use that gift.

And a second great principle of the divine outworking

is that He multiplies as we pour out. Somewhere in Europe I saw a painting of the miracle of the water made wine at Cana, and the artist had caught the very secret of matter, for the liquid left the vessels water, crystal clear, and entered the water pots wine, ruby red. It was transformed between the vessel it left and the vessel it entered. The sun's rays traverse millions of miles of space black as blackest midnight and inconceivably cold, and it is only when they strike upon the atmosphere of earth that they burst into a glory of light and warmth. If we now add to these two truths the significance of the element used in this miracle, oil, we shall have a deeply important lesson all told out. For oil is constantly the symbol of the Holy Spirit. Every believer has received the Spirit, contains the Spirit (1 Cor. vi: 19; Rom. viii: 9; 1 John ii: 20, 27)—a mighty fact big with possibilities in life and service. But Christ, using another symbol of the Spirit, water, teaches that the manifestation of the Spirit is not stagnation, but motion—the upspringing fountain, the outflowing rivers. When, then, we exercise our gift, however small it may seem, the Spirit Himself moves. The whole secret of true service, and of multiplied power and blessing lies, then, in that question, "What hast thou in the house.....pour out into all those vessels."

ELISHA AND THE SHUNAMITE.

(2 Kings iv: 25-37.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Faith of the Shunamite* (verses 25, 26).—The woman's answer, "It is well," was a sublime instance of true faith. Her child lay dead, but she could still say, "It is well."

2. *The Sorrow Told Out* (verses 27, 28).—Faith says, "It is well" in the very instant that faith grasps as it were the feet of God to tell Him all the sorrowful story.

3. *The Fruitless Errand* (verses 29-32).—See "The Heart of the Lesson."

4. *The Effective Service* (verses 32-37).—See "The Heart of the Lesson."

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The intensely vital character of true Christian service is the heart of things here. There is a vast deal of so-called Christian service which is naught but sending a servant with a dead stick. If there is a need somewhere we proceed to organize. A society is formed, or at least a committee. These require chairmen, secretaries, treasurers, and, above all, much, very much, talk. Then these chairmen, secretaries and treasurers are supposed to be in "Christian service," and all the rest of us, who are not officers, but "belong," are also supposed to be in "Christian service." If it is a home affair the "service" consists in holding stated meetings of the society or committee, and in more or less zealous efforts to induce others to "join." As some one has wittily said, "We have a lookout committee, but not a go-out committee."

If it is a foreign affair we send some one, after a farewell

meeting somewhat after the fashion of that which Elisha held for Gehazi. What a "charge" that was! "Gird up thy loins, and take thy staff in thine hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man salute him not." How impressive! The staff we send by our Gehazi has been fashioned and polished during three years in a theological seminary. Thank God many a Gehazi finds a better one, a living and life-giving staff in the Word of God—but we do not require him to have *this* staff, but only *that*.

And when, equipped well or ill, we once send Gehazi we practically wash our hands of him. A few pray for him, a few send him of their substance, but for the immense majority of us, he is a forgotten Gehazi. And all this, and more of like method and quality, we call Christian service. And Christian service it truly is for him who, in real devotedness to Christ, goes; and Christian service it truly is for those who, in ceaseless prayer, and in sacrificial gifts, are really, *in* the sent one stretching themselves upon the spiritually dead ones to whom he has gone—but for us! Alas, what mockery!

True service costs, and costs vitally—costs life itself. Not a dead staff but a living heart laid upon a dead heart—that counts, and that, be it repeated, costs.

When the woman in the Syrian street touched the swaying hem of Christ's seamless robe as He walked, she was instantly healed. What else? The Lord of life stopped. "Who hath touched me? for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me." The woman was healed, but it cost, cost vitality.

An American woman whose giving is the giving of a princess of the kingdom of God, said to me: "It is so easy just to sign checks if one happens to have money at the bank, but I don't think that counts unless we find a way to give ourselves, too."

And we must remember the terms of our commission, "Go ye." Doubtless the Lord knew that the church would soon come to read that personal imperative, "Send Gehazi," but nevertheless what He actually said was "Go *ye*." One does not recall that he ever, when message bearing was in question, asked a disciple to ask another disciple to go.

All this does not mean that some measure of organization is not necessary to some spheres of Christian service. Good order and efficiency sometimes requires this; but it does mean that in so far as we are not ourselves losing our lives in this service that we may find them again, we are mere senders of Gehazi. For He who said of Himself, "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit," said in the next breath, "if any man will save his life he shall lose it, but if he lose his life for my sake and the Gospel's he shall find it again."

ELISHA AND NAAMAN.

(2 Kings v: 1-14.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Fatal Word of Three Letters* (verse 1).—If we could see as God sees we should say that the most fortunate man on earth is the most unfortunate if his sin has never been taken away.

2. *The Faithful Witness* (verses 2-4).—There is something touching both in the courage and compassion of this little captive maid. She was the victim of a great wrong, but free from resentment.

3. *The Reasoning of the Flesh* (verses 5-7).—See "The Heart of the Lesson."

4. *The True Remedy* (verses 8-14).—See "The Heart of the Lesson."

5. *The Peril of Naaman from Three Enemies* (verses 11, 12).—See "The Heart of the Lesson."

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The story of Naaman has been the theme of countless Gospel sermons, and rightly so, for it is packed with Gospel analogies. These group about, or grow out of, certain significant words or phrases. The first of these is that little "but" which mocked all the good fortune of Naaman and shut the sunshine out of his life. Everything favored him "but"—. He was captain of the host—"but." He was a great man and honorable—"but." Mighty was he in valor —"but." He was even a man whom the Lord had used providentially—"but he was a leper."

That little qualifying word of three letters nullified all the great swelling words in which his state and prosperity were described.

The writer, in years agone, had a friend whom the world envied. He was stately of stature, great of intellect, clean, brave, successful. He had a beautiful young wife whom he idolized. One day his doctor met him on the court house steps. "I do not like your color; come at once to see me." The next day he passed two hours with three physicians in consultation. At the end they said: "Set your house in order; you have three months of life at farthest." The world envied him—"but."

And so one might go through this lesson, finding in all the pivotal words wonderful Gospel analogies.

But we are concerned with the heart of the lesson and that seems to lie in the fact that Naaman came so perilously near to missing his healing. With a perfect knowledge of

the conditions which, once met, made his recovery sure, he actually "turned and went away in a rage."

Three enemies of Naaman's, all pampered and nourished by him as his dearest friends, came near to accomplishing his destruction that day. They were all within his own heart, as they are within the heart of every one of us.

The first enemy was Pride. In the very outset Pride began to work. Pride said: "You are a great man; go on this journey in state. Impress this prophet with the fact that he has no common leper to deal with. Then Pride was ready to suggest an affront because the prophet did not come out to so distinguished and celebrated a leper.

The second enemy was Preconception. "Behold I thought he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place? Naaman had a preconceived opinion or plan concerning the manner of his healing. Thousands of sinners have, often unconsciously no doubt, a plan about their conversion. Appealed to in a quiet conversation, or in a quiet meeting, to make an instant decision for Christ, they draw back—"Not *now,* not *this* way."

And the third of Naaman's enemies that day was Prejudice. "Jordan?" said Prejudice, "Wash in *Jordan?"* The rivers of Damascus are better. Suppose Spurgeon, Baptist born and Baptist bred, had said to the Spirit that stormy morning in the Primitive Methodist chapel, "What a Spurgeon converted in a Methodist chapel? Never!" How the current of his life, of uncounted thousands of lives, might have been changed. It is awful to die without Christ in an African jungle, but to turn away from the Gospel in a land of Bibles and churches, oh, this is more unspeakably tragic.

ELISHA AT DOTHAN.

(2 Kings vi: 8-23.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Perplexity and Wrath of the King* (verses 8-13).—The world is often puzzled by the deliverances of the Lord's people. Be sure back of the event is ever the hand of God.

2. *The Unseen Resources of the Saints* (verses 14-17).—See "The Heart of the Lesson."

3. *The Power of God and the Prayer of Faith* (verses 18-21).—Elisha called upon the unseen God and the answer came.

4. *The Pity of the Saintly Heart* (verses 21-23).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The unseen, but none the less real, resources of the man of God—that, obviously, is at the core of things here. It is a timely lesson. Never before in the history of the church have the forces of anti-supernaturalism been so numerous, never before have their assaults at every point been so determined and continuous.

Probably the projection into the thought of the world of the hypothesis of evolution began the battle; probably this hypothesis is back of every assault. It seemed to eliminate God, if not as the remote first Cause, at least from every succeeding step of causation in the universe. Then the whole ground of supernaturalism became a battlefield. Miracle was declared to be a scientific absurdity; the inspiration and authority of the Bible were first questioned, then denied, and now, as Dale of Birmingham predicted thirty years ago, the storm is gathering "above one sacred Head,"

in the philosophic evaporation into nothingness of the virgin birth of our Lord, and the denial of His physical resurrection.

With these negations as weapons of open and avowed adversaries of supernaturalism we have been long familiar—the peril of to-day is that those weapons are in the hands of avowed friends.

And yet it remains true that Christianity is essentially supernatural, or else it is false. Paul's triumphant challenge cannot be eliminated from Christianity without destroying it. "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

Nay, he makes the whole system to hinge, not upon its ethical beauty, as is the present day fashion, but upon the physical fact of Christ's resurrection: "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in yours sins."

And the Christian ethic is as supernatural as the Gospel history. "Christianity," said an acute and not unfriendly critic, "is the impossible religion. No man *can* be as good as Christianity requires all men to be." And no truer thing was ever said if there are no supernatural powers encamped round about the believer. Christian character includes morality, but rises heaven high above it. Christian character is "love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," and not one of those graces is indigenous in the natural heart; they are all exotics. But the "mountain *is* full of horses and chariots of fire round about" the Christian. The whole power of God is round about and within him. He that is for us is ever and always more than they that be against us. Prayer is as practical a force as electricity or steam. The angels still live and still

serve. The Holy Spirit has lost no whit of His power. God is still faithful who promised, and will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape. Christ still lives to make intercession for us, and is still able to keep to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. He is still touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and still able to succor us when tempted.

THE CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH.

(2 Chron. xxxvi: 11-21.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Wicked King* (verses 11-14).—Note that the rejection of the words of Jeremiah was in reality the rejection of God's words.

2. *The Wicked Priests* (verse 14).—The priests were, equally with the king, rejectors of the word of the Lord. In all history priests side with kings against prophets.

3. *Warning and Judgment* (verses 15-20).—This is ever the divine way—warning precedes judgment.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

"Till there was no remedy"—that awful phrase opens the deepest heart of this lesson. It is not, observe that *man* had no remedy as against the king of the Chaldees, but that *God* had no remedy for His people—"till there was no remedy." There had been a remedy. Jeremiah and Isaiah and all the preëxile prophets had published abroad the divine and perfect remedy. Isaiah had said, "Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of

the pit whence ye are digged." "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land."

Jeremiah had cried: "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved." "The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all ye of Judah that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place."

In Jehovah was a perfect remedy for all the evil of Judah, but—"They mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, *and there was no remedy.*"

In other words, when God's remedy is rejected, "there is no remedy."

Doubtless the majority called Jeremiah a "gloomy pessimist." The times were good, the comfort of life constantly increased, men spoke of the ruder times of their fathers and boasted of progress. The priests would be ready to point out the improbability, even the absurdity, of the notion that Jehovah would permit His city and temple to be overthrown. Had not Israel a great mission yet unaccomplished so long as all peoples did not recognize the unity of God? To say that He would destroy the religion which He had Himself planted would be to say that the purposes of God were thwarted.

Just so men reason in this Gospel age. To speak of coming judgments of an apostate church, of another advent of Christ, is to say that the Gospel has failed.

The answer both then and now is that neither the ultimate purposes of God through Israel nor through the Gospel will fail. It is *men* who fail; *men* who become apostate,

whether in Israel or the church and then *"there is no remedy,"* so far as men are concerned. But God remains, and in other ways He accomplishes His purposes.

Judah was judged and sent into captivity. "There was no remedy" for that. Judah, after seventy years, was restored and held in the land till Christ came and was rejected. Then again "there was no remedy," and Judah was sent into a dispersion which still continues. But Israel will be restored, and then, that people will not fail.

THE LIFE-GIVING STREAM.

(Ezek. xlvii: 1-12.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Source of the River* (verses 1-2).—All blessing proceeds from the altar.
2. *The Magnitude of the River* (verses 3-5).
3. *The Power of the River* (verses 6-12).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

Perhaps no passage of the prophetic Scriptures has been more tortured out of its right and true meaning than this. By most commentators it has been taken as a symbol of the spread of the Gospel in a stream ever wider and deeper till the whole world has been converted. But against this interpretation three objections lie. 1. The Scriptures do not teach the conversion of the whole world by the preaching of the Gospel, but rather that the present age is to witness the outcalling of a people for His name, who are to form the church which is His body. 2. Other Scriptures make it clear that the river is to be a literal river, issuing from the temple which will be built in Jerusalem after the restoration

of the Jews (Zech. xiv: 8; Rev. xxii: 1). 3. The seas into which it will flow will be the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean, though the former is most prominent. Such geographical indications are too much a vital part of the narrative to be set aside by the necessities of a fanciful interpretation. It will be remembered that in connection with the judgment of the nations and the return of the Lord, cataclysmic changes are predicted for the reign about Jerusalem; "The mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley." "All the land shall be turned as a plain, from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem (Zech. xiv: 4, 10).

Strange that this should seem incredible to a generation which has seen the blowing into mere dust of the Krakatoa by an explosion from within, and of the desolation of a whole land by the eruption of Mount Pelee! Why should not a little hill like the Mount of Olives cleave in the midst thereof? Why should not the God who brought water out of a rock in the wilderness, bring a river out of Mount Moriah?

So much for interpretation. But application and interpretation are quite different things. The Sermon on the Mount is to be *interpreted* of the future kingdom, but it is always true that the meek are happy, and that the pure in heart see God.

So there may well be an *application* of Ezekiel's river to the work of the Holy Spirit now. Water is even a type of both the Spirit and the word, and Christ uses "rivers of living water" (John vii: 49) to illustrate the work of the Spirit at and after Pentecost.

The ankles speak of the walk, and suggest "walking in the Spirit." The righteousness of the law is "fulfilled in us

who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit" (Rom. viii: 6), and "if we walk in the Spirit we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh" (Gal. v: 16).

Again, the knees suggest prayer, and we are reminded that it is peculiarly the Christian's privilege to "pray in the Spirit." Perhaps there is no greater need than this—that we cease to pray in the sphere of the will or of the desires, and learn to abandon ourselves to the Spirit that He may pray through us.

And so the loins speak of service. No truth for this dispensation stands out more clearly than that all fruitful and acceptable service must be in the power of the Spirit. The very apostles of our Lord, men who had been for three years under His personal training, and to whom, after His resurrection he had taught kingdom truth for forty days (Acts i: 3), were forbidden to begin their great mission till they were endued with power from on high. How presumptuous, then, for *us* to presume to serve except in the power of the Spirit.

"Waters to swim in" speak of the divine fulness which is for us.

But perhaps the heart of this lesson is to be found in the one exception to the healing power of the waters. "But the miry places thereof and the marshes thereof shall not be healed."

The interpretation here is, of course, liberal, but the application is obvious. A miry place and a marsh are places where much water has already come in vain. The miry place has turned it into mud, and the marsh into an uncultivable bog—a place of miasma and malaria. Surely here is an apt picture of one upon whom the convictive and persuasive influences of the Spirit have come in vain. "For the earth that drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and

bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

DANIEL IN BABYLON.

(Daniel i: 8-20.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Purpose of Daniel's Heart* (verse 8).
2. *The Answering Favor of God* (verse 9).
3. *The Perplexity of the Steward and the Victorious Test* (verses 10-20).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The heart of this lesson is the exceeding value of a definite heart purpose. "Daniel purposed in his heart." That is the key to the character of Daniel, and the key also to his life story. "Daniel purposed in his heart to be loyal to Jehovah in even so minor a detail of obedience as eating and drinking, and we may reverently say that Jehovah purposed in *His* heart that Daniel should be a monument in Babylon of His power and wisdom. And we read: "And Daniel continued even unto the first year of King Cyrus." That was God's answer to Daniel's purpose of heart. King followed king in Babylon, even the dynasty changed, but "Daniel continued." Great cabals were formed of mighty princes and influential courtiers to put down Daniel, but "Daniel continued." Daniel himself was a sinner (ix: 20), but "Daniel continued." The one steadfast thing in all that changing, shifting court was an alien and hated Jew because Daniel

had "purposed in *his* heart," and because Jehovah had purposed in *His* heart.

Do not suppose the purpose in Daniel's heart arose from a mere dietary question—of whether the king's meat, or pulse, were the better food. Not at all. Daniel belonged to a people in covenant relations with God. In Daniel's nation the government was a theocracy. Whoever might sit visibly on David's throne, the invisible One was the real king, and He had ordered even the dietary of His people. Daniel would not eat the king of Babylon's meat because *Daniel's* king had instructed otherwise.

Think how many excuses Daniel might have made at the bar of his own conscience. He might have pleaded his circumstances. He was in Babylon through no wish of his own. God in His providence had permitted him to be carried away captive. He might have pleaded a reasonable and prudent, self-interest, fearing, not unreasonably, to offend that irresponsible despot whose slave he was. He might have pleaded the relative unimportance of the matter.

It was no question of breaking the *moral* law. He was not asked to worship other gods, nor to bear false witness, nor to blaspheme. It was just a question of eating and drinking—why carry to such an extreme the puritanic customs of remote and provincial Judæa?

Thousands of young men have reasoned thus who have gone down from the home farm to the new scenes and new ways of the great city, and thousands have fallen by the way just because they had not firmness of moral fibre and strength of conviction to purpose in their hearts to maintain the temperance in eating and drinking in which they had been nurtured, and which their best convictions approved.

Other thousands have maintained simplicity of life, but have given way at the point of business rectitude. Great

financial prosperity may have come to some of them, but at the awful cost of an approving conscience, and, too often, of an old age of public contempt and obloquy.

The story of Daniel can never grow old so long as there are young men to be tempted to surrender principle at the demand of expediency—so long as men and women of any age are called upon to choose between the easy way of conformity to lower standards, and the other way of a purposeful heart.

DANIEL AND BELSHAZZAR.

(Daniel v: 17-30.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Unheeded Lesson of History* (verses 17-24). Daniel rehearses to Belshazzar the well-known circumstances of his father's reign. The impressive lessons of that history Belshazzar had passed by unheeded. Now nothing remains but his deposition.

2. *The irreversible sentence* (verses 25-30). Belshazzar was yet a very young man. It is one of the fearful things about sin that the human heart may become hopelessly set in the love of it at a very early age.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

We must bear in mind the peculiar circumstances under which the prophet Daniel writes. He was a Jewish prophet, but a prophet out of the land. Israel, under the chastening hand of Jehovah, often warned, but apostate and unheeding, has been given into captivity under the Babylonian power of Nebuchadnezzar. With the captivity, and with the empire of Nebuchadnezzar begun that long period of Gentile world-

empire which our Lord designates as "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke xxi: 24), which still continues, and which will continue till "the God of the heavens" (Daniel ii: 44) shall smite with judgment the whole fabric of Gentile civilization and authority, and set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed (Dan. ii: 44; vii: 14-18). The visible token and sign of the continuance of the times of the Gentiles is that Jerusalem is under alien and Gentile domination. That domination, be it remembered, is not broken by the gradual absorption into the kingdom of heaven of the Gentiles, through conversion. The end of Gentile political supremacy over the Jew and over the earth is sudden, catastrophic, destructive (Daniel ii: 34, 35; vii: 9-11; Rev. xix: 11-21; 1 Thess. v: 2, 3; 2 Thess. ii: 3-8).

Daniel, then, placed at the beginning of this long period in which we still live, writes on two great themes: First, he tells, prophetically, the whole course and end of the times of the Gentiles, *i. e.*, the present civilization; and, secondly, he enters into minute details concerning the events in which Gentiledom ends, especially as those events bear upon the Jews.

Putting ourselves, then, at Daniel's viewpoint, it is not difficult to see that the heart of this lesson is to be found in that explanation of Elohim's disciplinary dealing with Nebuchadnezzar, the first of the Gentile World-Kings, which we have in verses 18-21. At the very threshold of an epoch which, as He Knew, would be of long continuance, and frought with events and consequences of cosmic significance, He impressively taught that "the most high God ruleth in the kingdom of men, and that He appointeth over it whomsoever He will." It is a lesson long since forgotten by the Gentile civilizations. Even we boast of our government that it is "of the people, by the people, and for the people," and

the name of God does not appear in the Constitution. This, doubtless, is better than that monstrous perversion of Daniel's doctrine which was called "the divine right of kings," and under which Gentile kings shamelessly subjected the people, and especially the Jewish people, to awful tyranny, but it is none the less a setting aside of Daniel's doctrine. And yet, there have been some in all the ages of Gentile supremacy who, taught of God through His prophet Daniel, have perceived that the only true philosophy of history is to be found, not indeed in the divine *right* of rulers, but in their divine *responsibility*. Nations are creatures of time, not of eternity, and therefore the divine judgments fall upon nations now, and are not postponed to eternity. Nations have arisen during the times of the Gentiles, have come to great power, have abused that power and have passed away, or have been swallowed up in other powers. Every such national extinction is but another instance of the putting forth of the unseen Hand which branded Belshazzar's wall with the sentence of doom.

DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN.

(Daniel vi: 10-23.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The prayer of Daniel* (verses 10, 11). The words, "as he did aforetime," are significant. They speak of the power of habit. We say much concerning the power of evil habits —not enough of the power of good habits. Many a young man going from his country home into the temptations of city life has been carried through his dangerous first year by the inveterate habit of church going. 2. *The foolish law* (verses 12-15). The unchangeableness of the laws of

the Medes and Persians was but a codification of that worship of consistency, which, as Disraeli said, is the "virtue of feeble minds." No one but a fool never changes his mind. Wider knowledge, deeper experience, larger vision—these constantly change both opinion and conduct. 3. *The permitted peril* (verses 16, 17). Over such providences we write a wistful "Why?" Daniel was the best man of his time; God's most faithful servant—why the den of lions for *him?* 4. *The delivering God* (verses 18-23). "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but out of them all the Lord delivereth him."

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

It is not easy to say what is most surely central in this lesson. Most obviously we have here another striking instance of that truth which was before our minds when we were with Jeremiah in the dungeon, the permitted afflictions of the good, and the permitted power of the wicked. Why is "truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne?" It is the problem of Job; it sorely troubled Asaph (Psalm lxxiii). The mystery of the sufferings of the godly is indeed in this lesson, but it is also everywhere in Scripture and therefore cannot be distinctively the core truth before us to-day.

I think we shall most surely find it in the king's question at daybreak: "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" Form out of this a phrase, "the God of Daniel," and find the heart of the lesson therein.

The whole Bible, nay, the whole creation, is but a method of the self-revelation of God. He is ever seeking manifestation, for He knows that the one supreme need of the world is really to know God. "This is life eternal, that they might

know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John xvii: 3).

Now, among the various means used by the unseen God for His self-revelation is His association with certain human lives. What does He mean, for example, when He says, "I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob?" This, evidently: "I am the God who revealed what manner of being He is by associating myself with the lives of three men, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." These men, though closely related by blood, were men of diverse characters, and circumstances. The God of Abraham is a God who calls men out—out of idolatry into true worship; out of small things into great things; out of barrenness into marvellous fruitfulness. The God of Isaac is the God who does not despise negative and commonplace men—for such Isaac was—but so deals with them as to pass down and carry out the great purposes which had their beginnings in larger souls. The God of Jacob is the God who transforms character, who takes up a mean trickster, a "supplanter," and so deals with him that at last He makes him an Israel, a "prince with God."

Who, now, is this God of Daniel whom we have before us in this lesson? Very obviously He is the God who is able to deliver. Surely, in such a world as this—a world in which the lions of temptation and of destructive lusts crouch in every pathway, a God who was not able to deliver, would be a lacking God—a God weak at a vital point.

A missionary saw a heathen neighbor one morning throw his favorite idol to the ground and then proceed to kick it out of his compound. When the missionary asked the cause of such treatment, the heathen explained that the god had no power to deliver him. A powerless god is an object of just contempt. If the one living and true God, the God of

Daniel and of Paul and of all the tested saints in all the ages had not shown Himself mighty to deliver His people, no one would to-day believe on Him. Our God—the God of Daniel, is "able to deliver."

RETURNING FROM CAPTIVITY.

(Ezra i: 1-11.)

I. The Analysis.

1. The proclamation of the King (verses 1-4). 2. The response of the Jews (verses 5-11).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

It is right and logical that in arranging a series of Sunday school lessons which tells of the captivity of Israel, there should, in due order, be a lesson recording the return (in part) of Israel from that captivity. But why, in all the wealth of historic material concerning that return, these particular verses should have been selected, must remain, to most Bible students, one of the inscrutable mysteries of the lesson committee. But, though infelicitous as a selection, it is yet Scripture, and therefore infinitely precious.

Though not strictly germane to the heart of this lesson, it may be well to remind the scholar that the return from the captivity was partial, the ten tribes which had formed the northern kingdom having never, to this day, been restored. Also that the return of the remnant was in three detachments, at three different times, and under three different leaders. In B. C. 535 a company returned under Zerubabel and laid the temple foundations; B. C. 458 Ezra returns and restores the law and ritual; B. C. 445 Nehemiah led up a company and restored the walls, and the civil authority. Our lesson

has to do with the first of these. Sheshbazzar was the Persian name of Zerubabel.

It is not, therefore, the fact of the restoration which is peculiar to this lesson, nor may we find its heart in the fact.

Is it not to be found in something out of which the fact of the return grew—something which made the return a more absolute necessity than a law of nature, or the cosmic order? The latter will undergo, as it has undergone, great changes, but there is one thing in the universe which never changes, which is immutable and inevitable, and that is the Word of God.

Henry Drummond said that the one stable thing in the universe was a law of nature—a seeming-wise but really foolish saying. For Who is this Nature, personified continually in the writings of skeptical "scientists," so-called, who makes laws? It is God. And the power to make involves the power to unmake: "Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things which are shaken, as of things that are made" (Heb. xii: 26, 27), among which are these "laws of Nature." It is the Scripture "which cannot be broken." It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail."

Seventy years before the events recorded in this lesson, God had said by the prophet Jeremiah: "This whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years" (Jer. xxv: 11). "For thus saith the Lord, that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place" (Jer. xxix: 10).

And now the seventy years are accomplished and by a divine imperative the thing spoken *must* be done.

The heart of this lesson then is, generally, the immutability of the written Word of God; and, more specifically, of the prophetic word. At no other point is unbelief or doubt so little excusable. For already a great number of explicit prophecies have been literally fulfilled. And these predictions were uttered so long before the event—usually centuries—that no human foresight could have anticipated them; and they were so specific as to time, place and circumstance that no accidental combination of circumstances could have fulfilled them. When, therefore, we turn to predictions whose fulfilment is yet future, we are sure of two things: first, the thing spoken will come to pass; and, secondly, it will come to pass, not figuratively or allegorically, but with exact literalness.

REBUILDING THE TEMPLE.

(Ezra iii: 10-v: 4.)

I. The Analysis.

1. The foundation of praise (verses 10, 11). 2. Ill-timed grief (verses 12, 13). 3. The counsel of separation (verses 1-3). 4. The hired counsellors (verses 4, 5).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

Three perils in the face of which all Christian building is done, three methods of opposition to all constructive Christianity are present in this lesson, and form the heart of it.

First, *the opposition from pessimists.* It was a poor thing to drown the shout of the workers in the noise of the weeping of "many of the priests and Levites and chief of the

fathers" because *they* had "seen the first house." There is a shallow and unthinking pessimism as there is also a shallow and unthinking optimism. Men of the first type, many of them, in our day, men of a deep knowledge of the Scriptures and who should be mighty for God, are so persuaded of the degeneracy of the times, of the wide-spread apostasy from sound doctrine, and of the pervading sectarian confusion that they discourage all constructive work for Christ. "To what end?" they ask, "Since all is confusion, since so few give a clear testimony? Why seek to reconstruct a ruin? If, indeed, we might hope to reproduce the order, the zeal, the doctrinal soundness of the Apostolic church, then would we build with you. But, alas! alas! that may not be."

The truth being that there never was an "apostolic church" in the sense of a great organization of churches, and all pervaded by holy zeal and biblical accuracy. It is purely a figment of the imagination. There were, in apostolic times, scattered churches, made up for the most part of slaves and of the very poor; and some of these were zealous and holy and well instructed, and some were carnal and mistaught.

Never since Christ has there been so grand a chance to build local churches after the Apostolic mould and faith as just now when there is so much confusion and discord. There is no real room in Christianity for pessimism. The Christian knows that this age ends in apostasy, but he need not be an apostate. The very clamor about him of destructive criticism, of evolutionism gone mad, of theosophy, Christian Science and "new thought" is but a call to him to abide faithful. Similarly, the fact that churches have swung so far away from the simple primitive order is but a call of God to every local church to resume that order.

Second, *the opposition from world-mixture.* "Let us build with you: for we seek your God," etc. Never was there a

time when it was more necessary for the churches of Jesus Christ to remember Zerubabel's noble answer: "Ye have nothing to do with us, to build an house unto our God." To-day the churches of Jesus Christ stand upon every highway with the mendicant's whine of need, and the mendicant's outstretched palm. When a new meeting house is to be built every devise is resorted to to secure from a religion patronizing world as great a share of the cost as possible. No money is too "tainted" to be taken for the Lord's work. Men against whom reputable and responsible persons make charges of perjury, fraud, greed, deliberate injury of the weak and defenseless, are approached for great gifts to so-called Christian work. It is a time for the old Bible cry: "Come ye out from among them and touch not the unclean thing."

Third, *the open opposition of the world.* The late Lord Salisbury said, at the outbreak of the boxer rebellion, "Missionaries are very unpopular persons in the foreign ministries of all governments." What a confession. There is to-day, in the United States Senate, an absolute impossibility of securing a vote on the pure food bill. Why? The Department of Agriculture says because of the influence of distillers and manufacturers of injurious foods. Let righteousness strike a profitable evil, and that evil will find means to "frustrate their purpose."

POWER THROUGH GOD'S SPIRIT.

(Zech. iv: 1-10.)

I. The Analysis.

1. The prophet's vision (verses 1-3). 2. The angelic explanation (verses 4-6). 4. The exaltation of the headstone (verse 7). 5. The comforting promise (verses 8-10).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The lesson is full of precious things of God and of Christ, but scholar and teacher must choose between teaching the lesson of the candlestick, the olive trees and the headstone, and teaching the truth embodied in the lesson title, "Power through God's Spirit," which is also the truth of the golden text: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

It is not meant that the two parts of the lesson are in conflict—far be the thought—but only that in the candlestick and the headstone we have two precious types of Christ, while the latter part of the lesson the thought is more upon the Spirit.

But this very difficulty suggests that underlying truth which is the heart of the lesson—the truth, namely, that Christ, the Candlestick and the Head Stone is to be brought forth and exalted only through the power of the Spirit.

So much, in our day, is said and printed concerning the Holy Spirit that the mighty word by Zechariah, "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord," is in danger of becoming a mere cant phrase—a mere platitude of modern religious life. We answer, "Of course—who does not know that?" but we go on, nevertheless, in methods which assume that Christian victories are to be won *by* might and power *and* by God's Spirit. We forget the *"not* by," and the *"but* by."

It is no uncharity to say that in Christian work we all depend to-day chiefly upon three sources of power other than the Spirit of God.

The first of these is organization. To the simple apostolic and inspired organization, the local church, we have added an infinitude of purely human devices. We have gathered numbers of churches, sometimes many thousands of them,

into a something which we call a church. Still building, we have equipped our "church" with from three to eleven boards or societies, and with a multitude of smaller groupings of churches according to local contiguity or convenience, and each of these groupings has from two to eight officers.

Invading, then, the local churches themselves, we have organized a bewildering system of societies, committees, treasurers, chairmen, etc., etc. We have thus sophisticated the divine order and model because we believe in all good faith that power and efficiency will be thus increased.

The second source of power other than the Spirit of God upon which we chiefly depend is intellectual training. We have said, with the pagan, "Knowledge is power." We have said, and, through our religious journals are constantly saying that what we need for greater efficiency is a more highly trained ministry; and, by that phrase we mean a ministry with a better equipment of learning. We verily believe our ministers will have more Christian efficiency—more power for God—if we teach them more things drawn, not at all from Scripture, nor from centuries of Christian experience, but from the latest hypotheses of men of science, the latest guesses of psychology, as to what the inner phenomena of life are, the latest proposals for the amelioration of the hard conditions of the present social order.

And the third source of power to which we seek with far more of faith and persistency than to the Spirit of God, is money. We verily do believe that if we had money enough we could convert the world. It has been recently gravely stated, and in an influential quarter, that we may not in the future hope to secure for the foreign field the "best equipped men and women" unless we "bravely face the fact" that they must be offered as much more money than they can earn at home as the perils of climate, discomforts and deprivations

of intellectual and social opportunities weigh against the choice of the foreign field.

No sane person undervalues training, but many sane persons overvalue it as a source of *power*. Money is, indeed, in some sort, absolutely essential to the prosecution of extended Christian enterprises—but it is *never* a source of *power*. Organization is necessary—as witness the organization of the primitive Christian life into assemblies—but organization is never *power*. When these, in utter subordination and abnegation, are put into the hands of the Spirit *He* may and will use them for the manifestation of *His* power.

ESTHER PLEADING FOR HER PEOPLE.

(Esther iv: 10-43.)

I. The Analysis.

1. Esther's call and her response of faith (verses 10-16). 2. The prayer of the people, and God's answer (iv: 17; v: 3).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

This lesson is so integral, so completely one, that we shall best come to understand its most central teaching by considering it all. It has been urged against the inspiration and canonicity of this Book that the name of Deity does not occur in it. Perhaps nothing could better illustrate the folly of the destructive criticism. Against Israel at this time had gone forth the word, lo ammi—"not my people" (Hosea i: 9, 10; ii: 23). It was not the abrogation of the Abrahamic, Deuteronomic and Davidic covenants (Gen. xii: 1-4; Deut. xxx: 1-10; 2 Sam. vii: 5-17), for these, it is repeatedly declared,

shall never fail; it was the chastisement of the ancient people by the withdrawal of the divine fellowship.

But, though withholding Himself from personal communion with his people, Jehovah nevertheless worked for them behind the screen of His providences. Denied, because of their sins, the joy of the felt presence of God, they were all the more the objects of His tender love (Hos. xiv: 1-6), of His ceaseless care.

How exquisitely in character, therefore, with this period in the history of the chosen people is this dealing in Esther. God's *name* is not mentioned, but God's *hand* is everywhere. It is even so through all the present church age. The "natural branches" are "broken off," but, "beloved for the fathers' sake," God, whose "gifts and calling are without repentance," "is able to graff them in again" (Rom. xi). Meantime, the true philosophy of Gentile world-history is to be found in the Divine dealing with the Jew.

Turning now to the lesson we shall have the heart of it, I think, in a certain sequence which gives to the events the relation of cause and consequence; and, supremely, in a word of Mordecai to Esther.

That order of events is: the humiliation before God of the imperilled Jews; the message to Esther; the response of Esther's faith; the preparation by fasting and prayer; the answer of God in His providential deliverance of His people. How easily it might all have been otherwise! The threatened Jews might have heaped their wealth at Haman's feet to placate his hatred. They might have sought to avert the impending doom by corrupting influential courtiers. They might have sought safety in flight. But they began by getting right with God, and all that followed had the inevitability of cause and effect. For then God begins to work, and their safety was at once assured.

But we must not pass over a word in Mordecai's message to the beautiful young Jewess who was to be God's instrument in the deliverance of her people: "And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Who, indeed, shall say that the whole past of Esther up to the moment when she stood, unbidden, before the king had not been ordered in view of the use God meant to make of her that day? For that, she had been born a Jewess that she might be bound up with the destinies of that people; for that, she had been dowered with beauty, that she might reach the heart of a sensual pagan king through the only avenue of access to the heart of such a man—his senses; for that, she had been raised to share that king's throne.

But if it were so with Esther, there emerges a principle of wide application in the interpretation of the divine providences. Is not that principle this: that opportunity to do good is at once the divine call to do that thing, and the interpretation of the divine dealing in the past which has at last brought the person and the opportunity together?

What, fundamentally, is the meaning of the crucifixion? "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." "A lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (Acts ii: 23; 1 Pet. i: 19, 20). How many centuries it required to bring at last Christ and the cross together!

So we, in the measure of our opportunity are to find the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. For such a time—though the service may be a small one—we came to the Kingdom.

EZRA'S JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM.

(Ezra viii: 21-32.)

I. The Analysis.

1. The right beginning (verses 21, 23). 2. The resolve of faith (verse 22). 3. Care about holy things (verses 24-30). 4. The care of God.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

Surely the heart of this lesson is not far to seek. Ezra had bravely borne a clear testimony to the power and righteousness of the God of Israel, and now he was not minded to stultify that testimony by seeking the aid of the world in a matter which concerned God. In other words, he was determined to be consistent. Having testified to the power of God, he felt bound to rest his case on that power. Doubtless many, possibly the king himself, who had heard Ezra's clear testimony, sneered: "We shall soon see this servant of so great a God asking for a military escort."

There is a true consistency, and a foolish consistency, as we have often remarked in these papers. The latter is illustrated by the laws of the Medes and Persians "which change not." Times change, circumstances change, laws must change. So must opinions, convictions even. To all growing natures there comes a larger vision, a new sense of the relations of things, new knowledge, deeper receptivity, and with these change is inevitable. In this sense is Johnson's famous dictum, "Consistency is the virtue of fools," to be taken.

But there are unchangeable things. God never changes. Jesus Christ is "the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever." And the truth of God never changes. It is as immutable as

God Himself. The revealed will of God never changes: "the Scripture cannot be broken" (John x: 35).

It follows that faith establishes certain relationships with God which do not change. Our apprehension of the wonder and privilege of our position as sons of God may grow broader and deeper, but we are never any more really sons of God than in the moment when we first believed in Christ, nor can we ever be any less than sons of God.

In the same way it is true that the world of unsaved human beings does not change. Individuals out of the world believe and pass into the family of God by the new birth. When they do that, *they* change, but the world of unsaved humanity is left unchanged.

The customs and manners of the world change. The world for nineteen hundred years has been growing more cultured, agreeable and law abiding. It is a far pleasanter place to live in than formerly. The modern city is vile enough, but one would rather live in New York than in the Rome of the first century, or the Paris or London of the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. The ethic of Christ, the presence in the world of Christianity, have made the change.

And this change is very misleading. Because the world is gentler in its normal states than formerly, we say it is more Christian. But the world is just the sum of the individuals at any one time on the earth, and an individual is not a Christian so long as he does not, by a definite act of faith, receive Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. He may take on some ways customary among Christians, as church going and contribution giving, but that no more makes him a Christian than a stage crown makes an actor a king, or burnt cork makes a white man a negro.

So of the world. It is the unchanged enemy of Jesus

Christ, the unrepentant rebel against God. The greed of its "captains of industry" is precisely the greed of the brutal robber barons of five hundred years ago. Its essential cruelty in condemning to painful deaths 10,000 industrious railway employees every year to save the expenditure of a few millions in preventive devices, is precisely the cruelty of Roman nobles witnessing the deaths of the arena. The only fundamental difference is that the railway barons do not like to see the mangled victims of their dividend producing greed.

Now the application of Ezra's counsel of consistency is evident. The Church testifies to the world that belief in Jesus Christ brings one into the family of the God of all the universe, the owner of the cattle on a thousand hills, of all the treasures of earth, that this Father has left His children in the world to bring the world to *His* riches. And the church stands a mendicant at every rich man's door!

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER.

(Neh. i: 1-11.)

I. The Analysis.

1. The evil estate of God's heritage (verses 1-3). 2. The prayer of a man who cared (verses 4-11).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

Two men, during the 70 years' captivity, were unceasing remembrances of the Lord in behalf of Israel—Nehemiah and Daniel (Dan. ix: 1-19). Their recorded prayers are strikingly alike, and each of them is a preciously complete lesson on prayer. Aside from the touching application to the Jewish people, I cannot but think the permanent value

of this lesson lies just there—it is a lesson in the divine art of prayer. Let us so consider it.

1. The first fact about this great prayer which arrests attention is that it was *intercessory*. Most of the prayers preserved for us in Scripture are intercessory. Doubtless the believer is to pray concerning his own life and its needs. Doubtless, though, the divine intent is that such prayers should by no means constitute the bulk of our praying. The New Testament believer is a priest (1 Pet. ii: 5-9; Rev. i: 5, 6), and "every priest" is "ordained *for men* in things pertaining to God." He must 'have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way" (Heb. v: 1, 2). And the will of God is that His New Testament believer-priests shall offer "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks," "for all men."

What an interceding believer-priest Paul was! His Epistles are fragrant with the breath of unselfish prayer, often with tears, and often "for as many as had not seen his face in the flesh."

2. Then, secondly, Nehemiah was moved to tears and fasting and prayers for Israel because they were "the children of Israel, *Thy* servants." It was something that touched the heart and the honor of *God* that the walls of Jerusalem should be broken down and the gates thereof burned with fire. Jerusalem was "the city of the great King," the "place which the Lord God had chosen." It was *His* people who had transgressed.

Every wholly right prayer puts *God's* honor first. "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be *Thy* name; *Thy* Kingdom come, *Thy* will be done."

3. Thirdly, it was a prayer which confessed the whole failure and need. There was no silly optimism in Nehe-

miah's prayer. "Both I and my father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee."

Just at that time Nehemiah was in a place of great intimacy and trust at court. All persecution of the Jews had ceased. They had grown rich and influential. A shallow optimism would have pointed—as perhaps many did point—to the prosperity in a temporal sense of the Jews as reason for gratulation and self-complacency. That is the prevailing note in our day. But the spiritually minded, like Nehemiah, knew that Israel had shamefully failed in her distinctive mission in the world, which was to be a witness to the unity of God in the midst of universal idolatry (Deut. vi: 4, with Isa. xliii: 10-12), and to illustrate to the nations the blessedness of serving the true God (Deut. xxxiii: 26-29; 1 Chr. xvii: 20, 21; Psa. cxliv: 15). In like manner the Church, to which was committed one, and but one, mission—to evangelize the world (Matt. xxviii: 18-20; Acts i: 8)—has never in any generation told the story to one-third of the human family, and has turned aside to the production of the mere by-products of Christianity—schools, hospitals, and orphanages. The Church will see a *real* revival when Daniels and Nehemiahs are moved to weep and confess her sin and failure.

4. Fourth, Nehemiah acknowledged the condition of Israel and Jerusalem to be due to the chastening hand of the Lord, according to His solemn warning in the Deuteronomic covenant (Deut. xxx: 1-10). It was no "misfortune" which had "happened" to Israel. The holy nation was captive in a strange land because God was chastising it.

Just such a word is given to the believer. "If we would judge ourselves we should not be judged; but when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. xi: 31, 32).

5. And, lastly, the very failure and sin of Israel but drove Nehemiah to the promises. The Deuteronomic covenant had more than warnings of disaster and of the chastening hand of God, and the suppliant cup-bearer fell back upon the promises of that covenant with unquestioning faith.

May we of the Church age, sons of the Father, remember as we see and mourn the failure of the Church His gracious promise: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

New Testament Studies

THE BOYHOOD OF CHRIST.

(Luke ii: 40-52.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The True Humanity of Jesus* (verses 40, 51, 52).—It is of the utmost importance to be clear at this point. Error as to the Person of Christ is so fundamental that it is sure to invalidate, in the end, every doctrine of the Gospel. In one respect only did the humanity of Jesus differ from that of all men—He was sinless both as to nature and act. In every other respect He was one of us, and one with us.

2. *The Jewish Nurture of Jesus* (verses 41, 42.)—Our Lord was "made under the law" (Gal. iv: 4), and the incident recorded in this lesson shows how carefully He was brought up in all its ordinances. It should be remembered that Jesus Christ was, as to His earth life, "a minister of the circumcision," whose ministry, therefore, related to the confirmation of "the promises unto the fathers" (Rom. xv: 8); and that the proclamation of mercy to the Gentiles did not begin till after His ascension and the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost. *Failure to see the legal and Jewish element in our Lord's teaching leads to the effort to bring that teaching over literally into the church—a thing wholly foreign to the Divine purpose.*

3. *The Danger of Losing the Fellowship of Jesus* (verses 44-48).—See below.

4. *The Full Divine Self-consciousness of Jesus* (verses 47, 49.)—Thirty years ago Dale of Birmingham, speaking upon the earlier phase of the higher criticism which seemed

comparatively harmless, predicted that within thirty years the storm would "gather over one sacred head!" That time has come. It is evident that Satan's work of undermining the authority of Scripture was but preliminary to an assault upon the deity of Jesus Christ. How important, then, this inspired testimony to the fact that even at the age of twelve Jesus was in the full consciousness of His divine sonship.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The present lesson may be said to have two centres—one doctrinal, the other practical. The doctrinal heart of the lesson concerns the Person of Christ. The higher criticism finds itself confronted at every step by the testimony of Christ concerning the inspiration and authority of the Old Testament. It is incontestable that He received the Holy Scriptures as of final authority, not only in the sphere of revelation of truth, but also as absolutely inerrant in every statement of fact.

But if Jesus Christ spoke as a first hand witness, with the authority of One who, in His eternal sonship, saw every word of the Old Testament written, then His testimony makes an end of the higher criticism. It became necessary, therefore, for the critics to impugn the divine knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and this they do by inventing what is called the kenotic theory, *i. e.*, the theory that in becoming flesh the eternal Son laid aside His divine knowledge and consciousness, and came under purely human limitations. The full answer to that dishonoring notion cannot be given here, but our lesson (verses 47, 49) is of itself a sufficient refutation. "As human He grew; as divine He knew," said Luther.

The practical heart of the lesson is most precious. It lies in the phrase: "Supposing Him to be in the company."

As the Nazareth party, happy in the sacred events of the week, started upon the return journey, Mary assumed that her wonderful and holy Son was somewhere in the company, but when the evening halt came she learned the bitter lesson which millions of Christians have also had to learn in distress and sorrow, that it is most dangerous to take the fellowship of the Son of God by way of easy assumption.

How many of us, happy in yesterday's blessings, have gone a day's journey "supposing Him to have been in the company," only to learn at night that we have been occupied with past experiences, and not with Himself. Two links unite us to Jesus, the link of life, which, thank God, can never be broken; and the link of fellowship, which may be interrupted by a heedless walk.

THE PREACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

(Matt. iii: 1-12.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Message and the Mission of John* (verses 1-3, 10, 12).—The position of John the Baptist with reference to Christ is simply defined by himself; he was "the friend of the Bridegroom" (John iii: 29), as Abraham was "the friend of God" (James iii: 22). He was the last and greatest (Matt. xi: 9, 10) of the Old Testament prophets, and to him was given the blessedness of seeing the Bridegroom and of hearing His voice. But John the Baptist's ministry was preparatory to the kingdom, not the church; nor was his message, "repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," a Gospel message. There is no preparatory message for this Gospel age. The Gospel says: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (Acts xvi: 31).

2. *The Test of True Repentance* (verse 8).—Repentance is a change of mind about Christ, but true repentance, like true faith, is an energizing principle—it bears fruit (Matt. xxi: 28-31).

3. *The Two Classes in Especial Peril* (verse 9).—The appearance amongst those who sought baptism at the hands of John of Pharisees and Sadducees aroused in John "the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke i: 17). The Sadducees were the rationalists and higher critics of that day Matt. xxi: 23-29), and the Pharisees the strict legalists. In many things they were far apart, and, upon a superficial view, seemed antagonistic, but the Spirit pierced down to their essential unity; they both said, "We have Abraham to our father." They were quite too good by natural descent to be lost. That was their peculiar peril—false security, self-satisfaction. It is the peril of millions to-day.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

But the heart of this lesson must be found in the tenth verse: "Now is the ax laid into the root of the trees." The long trail of human nature is over. Beginning with what the infidel evolutionist, Herbert Spencer, declares to be a scientific definition of heaven, "a perfect being in a perfect environment," man, at the first temptation, fell into sin. Tested thereafter under natural conscience, under human government, under covenant and promise, and finally under law, human nature was shown to be incurably evil. Neither the goodness nor the severity of God availed to produce fruit for God from that tree (Isa. i: 2-6, v: 1-7; Rom. iii: 9-18).

The current theological notion that man is now under probation is wholly misleading and untrue. Man is under condemnation (John iii: 18, 19), and spiritually dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. ii: 1, 5). The unbeliever is in

precisely the condition of a condemned criminal, execution of whose sentence is indefinitely deferred. Before him is, in any event, no matter what he may do, but one prospect—he *must* die. But, blessed be God, he may choose the manner of his death. He may believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and then he dies in and with Christ (Rom. vi: 2-6; Gal. ii: 19, 20), or he may go on in unbelief and find his part in the "lake of fire which is the second death"—a death which is not the extinction of being, but an endless and never consummated dying. But in any event, God, nineteen hundred years ago, ceased to expect anything from human nature. The old tree is hewn down.

THE BAPTISM AND TEMPTATION.

(Matt. iii: 13-iv: 11.)

I. The Analysis.

The lesson is in four divisions:—

1. *Jesus' Baptism by John* (iii: 13-15).—The fulfilling of *all* righteousness by the sinless One, who, for Himself, needed no baptism of repentance, but who, in the very initial step in His public ministry, acts vicariously in behalf of sinners who deeply need that baptism. This is precisely the doctrine of Col. ii: 12, which is not to be confused with Rom. vi: 4, 5. Doubtless, also, Christ's baptism in Jordan, the river of judgment, was typical of His coming death (Luke xii: 30). Reject the notion often taught that this baptism was a priestly washing. Jesus Christ's high priestly work did not begin "on the earth" (Heb. viii: 4), but when He was "lifted up from the earth" (John xii: 32), and "offered Himself without spot to God" (Heb. ix: 14) on the cross.

2. *Jesus' Baptism by the Holy Spirit* (iii: 16, 17).—From

this moment He becomes the Christ, which means the Anointed, the equivalent of the Hebrew Messiah. This anointing is unto His three-fold office of Prophet, Priest and King. He immediately enters upon His prophetic ministry; His priestly ministry began on the cross; His kingly work will begin at His appearing. The scene is also a complete manifestation of the Trinity.

3. *Jesus Christ's Temptation* (iv: 1-10).—The tempter is Satan himself. It is the testing of the "last Adam," the "second man" (1 Cor. xv: 45, 47). The appeal was to His three-fold being—body, "command that these stones be made bread"; soul, "cast thyself down"; spirit, "all these things will I give thee." In each the core of the appeal was to Jesus Christ as man, to act from Himself, in independence of the Father. It should be noted that the quotations used are from Deuteronomy—the book especially singled out by the higher critics as a late forgery. Imagine two beings like the Son of God and Lucifer, both of whom knew the facts, seriously quoting from a writing that both knew to be spurious!

4. *The Angelic Ministry of Jesus* (iv: 11).—It is important to note here that angels exercise a ministry of *physical* restoration and renewal (Luke xxii: 43; *cf.* 1 Kings xix: 5-8).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The central, vital truth of this lesson is not far to seek. Each of these first temptations of our Lord had one object—to seduce Him from the pathway marked out for Him as the Son of God on a mission to this world. The first would have taken Him from His appointed state of dependence on the Father for personal need. The second would have led Him beyond faith into a fanatical and presumptuous act for

which He had no word of Scripture, though Satan endeavored to persuade Him that He had. Here lies one of our subtlest dangers.

Every excess of fanaticism grounds itself on some misapplied passage of Scripture. Kingdom promises are put before believers who are members of Christ's body, not subjects of His millennial kingdom. Satan can quote Scripture, but Satan never applies it correctly.

The third temptation was still addressed to the one object—to get our Lord out of His appointed path. Nothing is more certain than that the kingdoms of this world are to become "the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ" (2 Sam. vii: 8-14; Psa. ii; Jer. xxiii: 5-8; Isa. ix: 6, 7; Luke i: 30-33; Acts xv: 14-17), but between the Son of man as He stood that day in the wilderness of the temptation, and the throne of His father David, lay the cross of Calvary. Every one of these temptations come to fellow-sons and co-heirs with Jesus. The pathway of faith lies through testings which appeal to bodily needs; to fanaticism instead of faith, and to the avoidance of that suffering which for us, too, lies between conversion and the crown (Rom. viii: 17).

REJECTED AT NAZARETH.

(Luke iv: 16-30.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The "Custom" of Jesus* (verse 16).—It is only a word, but what a wealth of revelation it contains. "As His custom was." It suggests the profoundly religious life of our Lord during the long years of silence at Nazareth. The word "religious" is used advisedly. Israel *had* a religion to practice (Gal. i: 13); Christians have a life to outlive (Gal.

ii: 20)—a very different thing. It suggests, too, the exceeding value of right habits (*cf.* Dan. vi: 10).

2. *The Fulfilled Prophecy* (verses 17-21). Here is a wonderful illustration of the minute accuracy of that verbally inspired Word of God, so impiously assailed by modern critics. The passage quoted by our Lord is found in Isaiah lxi: 1, 2, reference to which will show that our Lord suspended the reading at a comma, and in the middle of a sentence: "to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord"—"and he closed the book * * * and began to say unto them, This day has this Scripture been fulfilled in your ears. The conclusion of the sentence is, "and the day of vengeance of our God." But that day had not come then, nor has it yet come. It will be the baptism with fire (Matt. iii: 11) at His second coming.

3. *The Rejection of Jesus* (verse 22).—Men foolishly fancy that if they could *see* our Lord as in the days of His humiliation they would instantly believe. Ah, no. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead" (Luke xvi: 31).

4. *Jesus Rejecting the Rejecters* (verses 23-27).—This is the invariable order (Matt. xi: 19-24). The rejection may be cast in a polite form (Luke xiv: 16-24), or a contemptuous one (Matt. xxii: 2-7), but the result is the same—the rejecter of Jesus will find himself rejected at last. Not even the cloak of profession will avail (Matt. xxv: 10-12, 24-30).

5. *Jesus, Rejected by Israel, Will Turn to the Gentiles* (verses 25-27).—This foreview was wonderfully fulfilled in the Apostolic age, and since (Acts xviii: 6; xxviii: 25-28; xv: 14).

6. *The Wrath of the Rejecters* (verses 28, 29).—Deep in the heart of every rejecter of the Lord Jesus is black hatred of Him, and of His will. The world of unbelief would tear

God from His throne if it were possible. Think what a message of love and of helpfulness had been given from the lips of Christ that day. What a revelation of the deep evil of the natural heart is involved in the hatred of perfect grace!

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

If the underlying philosophy of the moral influence theory of the atonement were true, Jesus would have won His first mighty victory that day in Nazareth; for He was in the company that knew Him best. For nineteen years that small community had been in contact with the blameless and holy life of our Lord. Every soul in Nazareth would have some story of His loving helpfulness; every soul had felt the sweetness and power of His nature. One would say that here of all places He would be surest to win converts.

But it was not so. They wondered at His gracious words, but when He came to press His messianic claims they drew back. "Is not this Joseph's son?" And He made them see that He understood their thoughts. He was a Prophet in His own country, and could do mighty works there because of their unbelief. Unbelief—that stubborn barrier against which even divine power beats in vain. Mysterious limitation upon almightiness! With a breath He could have blotted them out of existence, but He "could do no mighty work" in the face of their unbelief. With unbelief alone millions are staying the grace of God which seeks to save them.

But it is only the *grace* of God which can be thrust back by unbelief. When again our Lord shall call for the roll of the prophet Isaiah, and begin to read at the place where He stopped that day in Nazareth, He will say: "And the day of vengeance of our God," and *then* unbelief will not stay His hand.

CALLING FOUR DISCIPLES.

(Luke v: 1-11.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Preaching from Simon's Boat* (verses 1-3).—Our Lord had returned from Nazareth to Capernaum, and was preaching in Galilee. We know from Matthew and Mark the burden of His preaching. It was the Gospel of the kingdom, not the Gospel of God's grace (Matt. iv: 17): "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (*cf.* Matt. x: 5-7). The King had come and was offering the kingdom (2 Sam. vii: 12-16; Isa. i: 1-3; Jer. xxiii: 3-8; Ezk. xxxvii: 21, 25; Luke i: 31-33), not the church.

2. *The Difference Between Self-Directed and Christ-Directed Work* (verses 4-7).—Here is a beautiful lesson in service. Mark the contrast: "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing"—"and when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes." If there was anything these men knew all about it was fishing. It was their trade. And, moreover, they knew all about that lake, and all about the habits of the fish in that lake. Like a highly trained ministry who have added, besides, experience to training, and who still catch no souls; and who, like Simon, James and John, must learn that all their training and experience is nothing unless directed by the Word of God. "At thy word I will let down the net."

3. *The Strange Prayer of Peter* (verse 8).—Why should a convicted sinner run away from God? Because every revelation of divine power brings with it the thought of judgment. It is impossible for the natural man who is thoroughly convicted of sin to think of God as merciful. Self-satisfied, self-righteous man, thinks with complacency of

God. He is sure that God approves him. But let a due sense of quiet come to him, and fear comes with it.

4. *The New Fishing* (verses 10, 11).—Mark renders (i: 17) "Come ye after me and I will make you to become fishers of men." The Lord said both things: "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

Obviously we are to find the heart of this lesson in that circumstance toward which the lesson tends, and in which it terminates: the Gospel method of using men to catch men for salvation. If we press the terms of our Lord's call we shall find them full of precious instruction in soul winning. Three kinds of fishing are mentioned in Scripture—the drag net (Matt. xiii: 47), the casting or hand net, and the angle. The first suggests great revival meetings where, indeed, after results often prove that the net "gathered of every kind," good and bad. The sifting at the end of the age will reject very many whose names, in time of religious excitement, are put upon church membership rolls. Still, we should thank God that many "good" fish also get into the drag net.

The casting or hand net suggests the work of preaching the Gospel in a quieter way, and to few rather than to great crowds. The great majority of Christian preachers have not the gifts for gathering multitudes, though they may stand by the great sea of humanity and faithfully make repeated casts. Such work was done by a poor Wesleyan preacher the day that Charles Spurgeon was saved. That was a great catch out of a small audience. Let no fisher of men despise the opportunity of preaching to a mere handful. Many such may read these words who are disheartened by scant success.

Courage, brother! there is joy in heaven over *one* sinner that repenteth.

Then there is the angle, which catches but one fish at a time. Those who cannot use the great drag net, nor even the hand net, may at least patiently angle for *one* fish. But this, too, requires skill and care. Be sure the bait is the true Gospel. Be willing to take infinite pains, and to have long patience. Remember, too, the word of the little country lad to the unsuccessful city angler: "You show yourself too much, sir."

A SABBATH IN CAPERNAUM.

(Mark i: 21-34.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Authority of Christ's Teaching* (verses 21, 22).—A scribe was a mere preserver of traditional interpretations, like a modern commentator. His teaching had, therefore, only the authority of tradition. The postulate was: This is true because all the great rabbis from Ezra down agree that so it is. But Jesus taught with original, underived, divine authority (*cf.* Matt. V., verses 21, 22).

2. *The Power of Christ's Word* (verses 23-28, 32-34).—The distinction between the work of Christ in casting out demons and that of His disciples was that He wrought by His inherent divine power—they, by the power of His name (Acts xvi: 18).

3. *The Power of Christ's Hand* (verses 30, 31).—The healing of Simon's wife's mother was another manifestation of divine power which is of special interest by the *method* adopted. The extended hand of our Lord may have been a crutch to the weak faith of the sufferer. It was the method

imitated by Peter (Acts iii:7) and is full of suggestion to Christian workers.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The divine and therefore absolute authority and power of Jesus Christ are the outstanding truths of this lesson. Never was a lesson more timely, for the undertone of modern religious thought is a subtle questioning of the authority of Christ's teaching and the power of Christ's word. The ethical beauty of His teaching is still loudly praised, but only one who is in close contact with current theology can appreciate the alarming extent to which the sovereign power of Christ is covertly questioned.

Three modern tendencies combine to effect this evil result. The first and most influential is incidental to the prevalency of the evolutionary hypothesis. Still a mere working theory with real scientists, the swarm of echomen, who deal with science at second hand, and who fill professorships in schools and colleges, teach evolution as a certainty of science. The result is that men have come to think of God as a mere remote First Cause who is powerless, or at least indisposed to interfere with the incredibly slow processes of evolution. Such a Christ cannot cast out demons by His Word, nor rebuke fevers by the touch of His hand.

The second of the causes operating to eliminate faith in Christ as authoritative is the low estimate everywhere now placed upon His Person. Much teaching on that vital subject is indistinguishable from Unitarianism, and even in quarters where the Trinity is still held to be true, it is said, as stated before, that the Son of God, in His incarnation, laid aside divine power and knowledge.

The third agency at work to destroy practical faith in Christ's authority and power is the widespread present

teaching concerning the inspiration of the Scriptures. In such publications as the "Outlook," and such books as Gladden's "Who Wrote the Bible," the "Temple Bible," and "Messages of the Bible," the higher criticism is popularized and brought level to the comprehension of the average reader. The result is that the authority and power of Christ as working forces in the life that now is are increasingly displaced from the sphere of faith.

CHRIST FORGIVES SINS.

(Mark ii: 1-12.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *A Lesson in Christian Service* (verses 3-5).—The four men who brought the palsied man to Jesus had great and necessary qualities for effective service. They could work together in harmony; each was willing to bear his share of the burden; they were moved by loving sympathy for the unfortunate man; they were willing to take great pains to accomplish his cure, and they had unquestioning faith in the power and willingness of Jesus to heal.

2. *A Lesson in Cause and Effect* (verses 5-12).—Jesus looked back of the palsy to its cause, sin (Comp. John v: 14). All disease, all death, is but a result of sin. Not, it should be needless to say, necessarily of the personal sin of the sufferer. Babes are born in an inheritance of sin and sin's consequences (Psa. li: 5; Rom. v: 12-14; John ix: 1-3). So our Lord deals first with the sin.

3. *A Lesson in the Primary Use of Miracle* (verses 9-11.)—The primary use of miracle is not beneficent, but evidential. It required nothing less than divine authority to heal the palsied man; it required nothing more than the divine

authority of Him who was to expiate human guilt, to forgive that guilt. Every dispensation is ushered in by miracle, because miracle is the divine method of authentication.

4. *A Lesson in the Secondary Use of Miracle* (verses 11, 12).—Though the divine power manifested in miracle is primarily for the authentication of a message, yet the wisdom and love of God so orders the miracle that it is beneficent. True miracle is never spectacular, but always connected in some way with a present need. It is not merely an exhibition of power, but an exhibition of power in the doing of some actual good. "Lying wonders" always break down at this point. The revelations of demons in spiritism are always foolish and useless. The false prophet will do "wonders," but of a purely dramatic kind (Rev. xiii: 15).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The power of faith is, from the human side, the heart of this lesson. Here, as ever, faith is shown in its two great uses. It inspires to effort in divine as in human things, and it furnishes the means by which divine power may link itself with human need.

It inspires to effort. Doubt never brought a palsied man to Christ, even though a roof must be broken up to accomplish it. Doubt, indeed, never effects any good thing. Doubt, unbelief, disbelief and misbelief all belong to Satan's kingdom, and are the offspring of the father of lies. They enfeeble and discourage. Even in the affairs of men all great things are wrought by men who believe. Cyrus W. Field believed that an electric current could be sent under the Atlantic through a wire cable. At first no one else believed, but faith is contagious; it invariably gathers to itself strong, aggressive souls. So others came to believe, and now, under every sea, nation talks to nation. Probably the effort

which brought the palsied man to Christ was born first in the faith of one of this immortal four. Probably this saving enterprise began with one convinced and believing man. At any rate, it commonly is so. When Paul, on the corn ship of Alexandria, stood forth after long abstinence, the one man of faith on that ship, it was he, the Jew prisoner, who instantly became the real commander. He had the word of the Lord that not a soul aboard should perish, though the ship must, and his faith made him supreme. And how his faith inspired them all to work! No, faith, not doubt, is the mother of effort. Among all the shallow sayings of Henry Drummond none was shallower than his statement that all advancement had its origin in a doubt. Apparently he was unable to distinguish between a doubt and a question. The longing to know is of God, as is also faith to believe that more knowledge may be had by patient and noble effort, but a doubt is a poor, negative, devil-born thing, infertile and apathetic.

And then faith links man and his needs with God and His power. It is the only capacity godward left of sin in the natural man—God's last unsquandered gift. By it, if he will (John v: 40), he may return to God. And faith in the saint is still the bridge over which heaven's fulness comes into his life. Absolutely all things are possible to faith, absolutely nothing is possible to unbelief.

CHRIST AND THE SABBATH.

(Matt. xii: 1-13.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *A Dispensational Lesson* (verses 1-4).—Always observe the time-notes in Scripture. "In that day" is a phrase which holds the key to Old Testament Prophecy. The phrase "at that time" marks the turning points in the life of Christ. In Matt. xi: 16-24 the rejected Christ turns Rejecter. The cities where the mightiest works had been wrought had not repented. For them, henceforth, probation was ended. "The judgment" (xi: 22-24) is now their one horizon. "At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath day through the corn." His disciples unquestionably violated the Sabbath (Numbers xv: 32-36) and Jesus justified them by the example of David and his men in the time of his rejection by Israel. The Son of David took His right place typically as the unacknowledged King of Israel.

2. *The One Greater than Temple and Ritual* (verses 5-8). —See below.

3. *How Formal Religion Hardens the Heart* (verses 9-13).—All history, biblical and secular, bears witness that no influence known to man so hardens the heart as religious formalism. The inveterate hatred which Jesus encountered was the hatred of the most religious men of His time. It was the hatred of priests and scribes that hounded the Son of God to the cross. The cruelest persecutions known to history have been incited and carried through by formal religionists.

4. *The Splendid Courage of Jesus* (verses 1-13).—None knew so well as He that a blow struck at the current Jewish notion of the peculiar sanctity of the temple and the Sab-

bath would create a fatal and final breach with Judaism. None knew so well as He that beyond that Sabbath eating of corn, and healing in the synagogue, lay the cross—yet Jesus unhesitatingly struck the fatal blow.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

All that Jesus did on that eventful Sabbath day was but the illustration of His two great sayings: "In this place is one greater than the temple": "For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day." The Revision omits "even" and "day"—"The Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath." This is the true form, simpler, grander than that of the authorized version. Apparently the Protestant translators drew back from the more austere declaration. For Protestantism is Galatianized to the core, and has never escaped from a scarcely modified Judaism concerning the Sabbath. To this day it is legality's most sensitive spot. Great denominations will bear with the higher criticism more patiently than with the truth concerning the Sabbath.

First of all, it is remarkable that, even in His strictly Jewish ministry (Rom. xv: 8; Matt. x: 5, 6; xv: 24), our Lord never repeated the seventh day commandment. Secondly, as Lord of the Sabbath, He cleared that Jewish institution from an unbiblical strictness; declaring that the Sabbath was made for man; *i. e.,* to serve man, not to impose a yoke of bondage upon man—and teaching that it was "lawful" to do good on the Sabbath day. Thirdly, He knew that through the entire dispensation which would begin from Pentecost, Christians would observe a wholly different day, namely, the first and not the seventh day. Fourthly, He Himself set the pattern of first day observance by what He did and said on the first of the first days, that of His resurrection. It was not a day of enforced rest, but of holy

activity. Rising from the dead He revealed Himself to the sorrowing Magdalene; sent a message of wonderful import to His disciples; held a secret interview with Peter; walked to Emmaus expounding the Scriptures; appeared to the assembled disciples, and imparted to them the Holy Spirit. The Sabbath belonged to the dispensation of law, was a day of enforced rest, and guarded by terrible legal sanctions. The first day belongs to the dispensation of grace, is a day of Christian activity, and finds its sanctions in the renewed hearts of Christ's redeemed ones.

No greater anomaly can well be imagined than that which is expressed in the phrase "Christian Sabbath." Its precise equivalent would be "legal grace." The Sabbath had its great and honored place in the national life of Israel; will again have its great place in the millennial earth; and is to the Christian a precious "shadow" (Col. ii: 16, 17) of that rest of God (Heb. iv: 3, 4) which he finds in Christ and His finished work.

HEARERS AND DOERS OF THE WORD.

(Matt. vii: 21-29.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Testing of Profession* (verses 21-23).—See below, "The Heart of the Lesson."

2. *The Right Foundation* (verses 23-25.)—Two points must be observed here, (1) it is not what the wise man builds, but *where* he builds which marks him a saved man (1 Cor. iii: 10-15). The "rock" is Christ (1 Cor. x: 4), and the man who builds thereon is neither a *professor* ("Lord, Lord"), nor a mere hearer (Hebrews iv: 2), nor a tireless *worker* (verse 22), but a *believer* (John vi: 28, 29).

3. *The Wrong Foundation* (verses 26-28).—Conversely, the sandy foundation man is a hearer who may indeed prophesy, cast out demons, and do many wonderful works; but who fails to "work the works of God" (John vi: 28, 29). In a word, the right foundation is Christ received by faith; the wrong foundation is, knowledge without the obedience of faith.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

Evidently, the heart of things here is the solemn fact that God accepts from no man the "Lord, Lord" of mere profession. No one is in so much danger as the professor who is not a possessor. It is a position which may be wholly free from any conscious hypocrisy. Millions "join the church" who never join Christ (1 Cor. vi: 17; xii: 12, 13); and their danger lies in the very fact that they are saying "Lord, Lord," as a parrot might, without any vital faith in Him who "died for our sins, and rose again for our justification."

Supposing themselves to be Christians, they are unmoved by Gospel appeals. The men of this lesson are genuinely astonished to find themselves excluded. "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?

That a notable preacher has won thousands of converts is no proof that he is a Christian. It is the name of Jesus, and the potency of His Word (Isa. lv: 2) which have wrought the "wonderful works," not the faith of the unconverted preacher.

It is to be noted, furthermore, that Matthew is the book of the kingdom of heaven, and is filled with warnings to mere professing subjects of that kingdom. In Matthew it

is Christendom—the sphere of profession—which is prominently in view. What Christendom, as distinguished from the church, is, is told out in Matthew xiii. There tares and wheat are seen growing together till the harvest. The tares are the children of the wicked one, and, under the garb of profession, are so like the wheat, the real children of the kingdom, that only the angels can be trusted to separate them (Matt. xiii: 24-30, 36-43; xxv: 8-12, 24-30). Therefore tests are given by which false teachers may be distinguished from the true (Matt. vii: 15, 16); and by which a deceived professor may be undeceived (vii: 21). That test is not zeal (verse 22), but simple obedience to the known will of God. What that will is Jesus plainly declared (John vi: 28, 29). Not casting out demons, not preaching, not wonderful works, but, "this is the will of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent," that is the true test. Every such believer is building on the Rock.

HE CALMS THE STORM.

(Mark iv: 35-41.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *Difficulties in the path of obedience* (verses 35-37).—It is easy to misinterpret the providences of God, and this we are in especial danger of doing when troubles seem overwhelming. We may hastily say: "Somehow, I have missed the Lord's guidance;" or, "I am under chastening for failure." We forget that testings are inevitable in the path of faith (James i: 12; 1 Pet. iv: 12, 13). The path of obedience for Shadrach, Mesach, and Abednego led straight into a fiery furnace, and for Daniel, into a den of lions.

2. *The human Christ* (verse 38).—It had been a day of

intense activity, and Jesus was physically exhausted. True service is costly—costs life itself. When the woman with an issue of blood touched Jesus' garment she was healed, but He said: "I perceive that virtue is gone out of me" (Luke viii: 46). But more than physical effort had marked this particular day. In it, our Lord had taken the place of the rejected One of Isa. vi: 9-11, and who shall say what sorrow for Israel had rent His heart (Comp. Mark iv with Matt. xiii: 10-15).

3. *The Divine Christ* (verse 39). How striking the contrast! In one instant, the weary Servant is in the sleep of utter exhaustion; in the next, He is creation's Lord, commanding the very elements of nature into obedience! Scripture never "reconciles" these paradoxes of the Incarnation—that is the poor botch-work of men.

4. *The question of unbelief,* verses 40, 41 (See below).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

"Carest thou not?" The disciple's question of unbelief is clearly the heart of things in this lesson—the question of our Lord, "Why are ye fearful? Have ye not yet faith?" (R. V.) makes it evident that not the wonder of the miracles, but the wonder of the disciples' unfaith occupied His mind. "Carest thou not?"—the disciple's question. "Why are ye fearful?"—our Lord's question. Let us think about these two questions.

And first the disciple's question. The storm was very great, so that even the hardy fishermen, whose familiar elements were wind and wave, began to lose hope—but the Lord of storms, the Master of waves, slept on. The peril grew greater, "insomuch that the boat was now filling" (R. V.)—but He made no sign. Truly, it *seemed* as if He did not care. Why should He, creation's Lord, be, or at least seem

to be, indifferent to the danger and distress of those who had left all to follow Him? It was indeed a most real difficulty to mere sense and reason.

And the disciples applied to the difficulty mere sense and reason. There were the wind and waves, and the rapidly filling boat; and there, His head upon the boat cushion, in the stern sheets, lay the Saviour, apparently unconscious and indifferent. Is the situation, in its deep heart and essence, unknown among us, the disciples of to-day? Is it just an old Bible story, with no modern instance and illustration? Alas, no. It is a very modern matter; it is the sin of us all.

Our business matters go wrong. It is not our fault; a great storm is sweeping over the world of business, and our little boat begins to fill, and we make our prayer, but no answer comes, and we say: "Carest thou not?" Or a dear one lies desperately near to death. Despite every effort, every resource of science, our heart's treasure slips through our clinging arms into death. We pray, but no answer comes, and in our bitterness we ask: "Carest thou not?"

Or there is before us some object of desire. It seems so near, so dear, so altogether innocent and right. We persuade ourselves that life's chiefest good lies in the thing desired. But heaven seems deaf, and we sadly say: "Carest thou not?"

It is all mere shameful unbelief and cruel wrong to Christ. He always cares—cares day and night—cares when we forget. But He cares for our highest good, and faith knows that He never cares more than when He seems asleep.

THE DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

(Matt. xiv: 1-12.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The cowardice of a bad conscience* (verses 1-3).—Men who reject the truth of God are sure to be the victims of superstition and error (2 Thess. ii: 9-12), and men who do wrong must suffer from an outraged conscience.

2. *The mystery of a perverted conscience* (verses 3-11).—Herod was afraid of John the Baptist with a superstitious fear. He was a degraded sensualist. If conscience could be utterly slain, Herod's would have been long since dead within him. But though the conscience may be perverted to any imaginable degree, dwarfed, or misdirected, it is sure to survive in some form. This man was willing enough to murder a righteous man, but not willing to break an unrighteous oath to a dancing woman (comp. Acts xxvi: 9-11).

3. *The resource of troubled saints,* verse 12 (See below).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

"And went and told Jesus." There was wisdom! Think how absolutely overwhelming was the disaster of John's death to his little company of followers. To become a disciple of John the Baptist meant little in the first flush of his popularity, but to remain his disciple after his biting invective had enraged the religious authorities, meant utter ostracism. And now he, the last and greatest of the old line of Israel's prophet's, was dead—done to death by the whim of an unclean despot at the request of a dancer! What was left to John's disciples? Why, to take up his dear body and bury it, and to go and tell Jesus. But that was everything. It is not merely that so long as Jesus is left to us no

disaster is irremediable. Far more than that: so long as Jesus is left to us, everything is left. To go and tell Jesus is the supreme resource.

It is the resource for consolation. There is a wonderful reticence in the Scripture narratives. We are not told what the Lord said to Simon Peter in that interview on the morning of the resurrection—that talk was too sacred for words. We are not told what Simon told Paul when, fourteen years after his return from Arabia, the great Apostle to the Gentiles went up to Jerusalem to see Peter. Neither are we told what wonderful words of comfort Jesus spake to John's grief-stricken disciples. These things cannot be told. Can *you* tell what Jesus said when your dearest one lay dead, and you went and told Jesus? No, you cannot.

One feels sure Jesus spoke much of the past. He would remind them how blessed they had been to have such companionship, to know the uplift, the inspiration of such a man's friendship. He would speak of the future, too; telling them that John's work and theirs was not lost, could never be lost. And He would be sure to say a word of heaven and of how they should reknit the old friendship up there, never more to be broken.

To go and tell Jesus is the resource for renewal of strength when hope is faint, and the way seems hard, and the heavens brass. "How can we go on, Master?" John's disciples would ask. "Go on with Me," would be the answer. "Do you not remember how John said, "I am not the Christ?" Here am I—the Light, the Life, the Truth, the Way—go on with Me."

It would be a poor thing to keep this resource only for the days of bereavement, of sorrow, of discouragement. When hope is high, and the pulse of life strong, and the horizon all aglow; when victory, not defeat; new life, not death,

have come, oh, *then,* too, go and tell Jesus. There is no sharer of joy and peace and power to compare with Jesus.

FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND.

(Matt. xiv: 13-23.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The compassion of Jesus* (verses 13, 14).—Mark tells us the cause of our Lord's compassion: "Because they were as sheep not having a shepherd." He adds, also, that, "He began to teach them many things." There is grave danger in the allegorizing habit, which must always find some occult meaning in our Lord's miracles. Again and again the Scriptures ascribe compassion as His sufficient motive (Matt. ix: 36; xiv: 14; xviii: 27; Luke vii: 13; x: 33, etc.).

2. *The superserviceable disciples* (verse 15).—This is the first recorded example of the habit of giving advice to the Lord—a habit which is all but universal among disciples today. It is, of course, a mere impertinence (Luke viii: 45; John xi: 39; Matt. xvi: 22.)

3. *Anything, plus the Lord Jesus, is enough,* verses 16-21 (See below).

4. *The divine order in ministry* (verse 19).—From the Lord, through man to men, is ever the divine order. It began with the incarnation, when "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," to be "made of a woman," that through a man He might save men. It is continued in this present church-age when the glorified Lord is giving gifts—"some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (Eph. iv: 11).

5. *The loneliness of Jesus* (verse 23).—It seems incredible that of all whom He had that day healed, taught, fed, not

one *refused* to be sent away—that not one followed even afar off, and then crept near to the lonely One in the darkness. What a commentary on human nature!

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

"Bring them hither to me." How amazed the disciples were when Jesus said of the hungry multitude: "They need not depart; give ye them to eat." "Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?" they asked (Mark vi: 37). But Philip was of opinion "that two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little" (John vi: 7).

Clearly the thing could not be done. The Lord had forgotten the slenderness of their resources. He was suggesting the impossible. So they would set Him right, and bring the matter to an end by plainly telling Him the facts. "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?" (John vi: 8, 9). That, of course, settled the matter, for the church had not yet reached the point of suggesting a pink social, or a Trilby party to increase its resources, nor, indeed, was there time.

But no, the quiet command came: "Make all sit down by companies on the green grass" (Mark vi: 39). And then He "took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude"—and, oh, wonder of wonders!—"they did all eat and were filled; and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full."

How this story repeats itself! For we are forever measuring the possibilities of Christian life and service by our five loaves and two fishes of resource, forgetting that we are a supernaturally redeemed folk, set to live by an ethical standard which is impossible to mere human nature, and to

perform tasks absolutely impossible to the natural man. Think of the command given by the risen Lord to a handful of illiterate Galileeans, to evangelize the world! Was any enterprise so vast ever committed to resources so inadequate? We are always forgetting that with God all things are possible.

The deeper truth is that there has never been a generation since Pentecost to which that enterprise was impossible. And to-day, in this present generation, disregarding entirely the professing church with its boundless wealth, it is entirely possible for ten thousand devoted Christians to evangelize the world if only they will put themselves and their resources into the power giving hands of Christ.

THE VISIT TO TYRE AND SIDON.

(Mark vii: 24-37.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Christ who cannot be hidden away* (verses 24, 25).—It was not only true of the earth life of our Lord that, once manifested to Israel, retirement became impossible (Mark ii: 1; iii: 7, 8; Luke vii: 37; Mark vi: 31-33); but in a deeper sense it is continuously true that wherever Christ is He cannot be hid. Secret discipleship is never a permanent possibility. If Christ be "in you the hope of glory" there will inevitably be some manifestation of His presence.

2. *The dispensational lesson* (verses 26-28).—Matthew tells us (xv: 22) that the Gentile woman began by seeking to put herself on Jewish ground: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David." But on that ground she had no rights (Eph. ii: 11, 12), for as a Gentile she was outside the Davidic Covenant (Matt. xv: 24). But when she took her

place on universal ground and called Him "Lord" (Matt. xv: 25) she obtained her request. On that ground "there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him" (Rom. x: 12, 13).

3. *The sigh of Christ* (verses 31-37). (See below.)

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

That Jesus should have preserved vital dispensational distinctions, remaining silent when addressed by a Gentile as "son of David" because the Gentiles as such are "strangers" from the Davidic "covenant of promise" (Eph. ii: 11, 12); that He should have responded when, taking her true Gentile position, she called upon Him as "Lord" (Rom. x: 12, 13); that He should heal the man who was deaf and dumb—these cannot be the core truths of this lesson, because they are equally taught in many lessons. He was always carefully preserving divinely made distinctions; He was always healing the sick, and restoring the infirm. But only twice is it said of Him that He sighed. Our lesson records the first instance, and again (Mark viii: 12), when the Pharisees sought of Him a sign, "He sighed deeply in His spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign?"

The character, the heart, the inmost thought of Jesus—these for centuries have been the study of those who have loved Him; who have with passionate intensity desired above all other desires that they might by any means come to be like Him. They have sought to come to the knowledge of these deeper facts of His being by meditation upon His words, and His actions. And this is a true method, for with Him whatever was outward, visible, audible, was in truth the natural and unforced expression of His inner self.

But may not an even surer highway into the heart of our

Lord be found through His emotions? Beyond question this is true of all other human beings—why not of Jesus, who was more truly human than we? Tell me what makes a man laugh, what makes him weep, what stirs his indignation, what arouses his wonder, what amazes him—and I shall come at no greatly inaccurate knowledge of the man himself.

Now Jesus was no stoic. He stood an unfallen man in the midst of fallen men, but foursquare to all the winds that swept over them, and He opened His heart to all the influences, not sinful, which played in upon their hearts. He loved children and flowers and birds. What does His sigh tell us of Him?

A sigh is the natural, physical expression of the peculiar depression caused by sadness. It does not imply discouragement—still less doubt or despair. It is the expression of the soul cast down. David knew this, and when his soul was cast down he still held high his faith and hope, and manfully talked with his soul. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him."

We know oft and again the soul cast down, and the sigh upbreathed from the depths. Oppressed by the ears deaf to the message of God, and lips dumb to the praises of God; oppressed by the hardness of the Pharisee's heart; feeling the dead weight of the accumulated sin of the centuries, we sigh!

Well, our blessed Lord sighed too, and under the same burden, but he healed as before, and fought steadily on—and so, God helping, will we.

PETER CONFESSES THE CHRIST.

(Mark viii: 27-38; Matt. xvi: 13-21.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The folly of human opinion about Jesus* (verses 27, 28).—For more than two years our Lord had pursued a ministry of extraordinary publicity and activity in a small and densely populated land. He was the most conspicuous figure of His time. Every one had heard of Him, or at least heard about Him. His own account of Himself as the Sent One of the Father, the Messiah, the Saviour, was well known. And these were the opinions of the public concerning Him —"John the Baptist, Elias, one of the prophets," What a comment on the truth of our Lord's words in John vi: 44!

2. *The great confession* (verse 29; Matt. xvi: 16).— "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Our Lord's answer was two-fold. He first points out the source of Peter's faith, "flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father in heaven." Flesh and blood said: "Elias or one of the prophets"; the Father said: "This is my beloved Son." So much, and so little, is mere human opinion, however scholarly, worth in the sphere of faith. Secondly, our Lord announced the church to be built upon Himself the Rock, in His character of "the Christ the Son of the Living God."

3. *Satan rebuked through Peter* (verses 31-33).—Compare Gen. iii: 14, 15; Isa. xiv: 4, 12. In the first instance Satan is addressed through Peter; in the second, through the serpent; in the third, through the king of Babylon. It is the way of Scripture. But the deeper lesson is that the servant of the Lord is never in greater danger of becoming the mere mouthpiece of the devil than in the moment of some peculiar spiritual revelation.

4. *The great law of the Christian life* (verses 34-38.) (See below.)

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The Christian, like Peter, is a confessor—which is quite another thing from being a professor. Like Peter, he believes that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of God," and, so believing, he "has life through his name" (John xx: 31), and he confesses that faith before men. But to believe on Christ implies vastly more than to believe that He interposed between the sinner and the doom of perdition. The act of faith identifies the believer with Christ; he becomes a branch in that Vine—a member in that Body (John xv: 1-4; 1 Cor. xii: 12, 13), sharing His nature (2 Peter i: 4), His life, His future (Col. iii: 3, 4).

And because of this absolute identification of the believer with "the Christ, the Son of God," he is committed to live the Christ life on earth. In its perfection, indeed, he may not hope to reproduce that life, but what he may do is to accept its basal principle.

When our Lord began to open that principle as applied to Himself, and "to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed," Peter cried out (Matt. xvi: 23), "Pity thyself, Lord." It was Satan's word, as our Lord declared, but, also, it was, and ever is, the word of the old self-life within.

What Peter passed over in his haste was our Lord's closing word, "and after three days rise again." Ah, that may make all the difference! Yes, it is that linking of eternal consequences to actions done in life that *does* make all the difference. Christ "endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God" (Heb. xii: 2),

and He endured for that "joy set before him."

That, precisely, is the principle, the philosophy, of the law of the Christian life enunciated in our lesson: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel's the same shall find it." When? "When He cometh in the Glory of His Father with the holy angels."

Here, then, is the heart of this lesson. To confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, is not only to find a Saviour, but to accept the Christ theory of life. That theory takes account of two worlds, and finds the life that now is to be incomparably the most precious and valuable thing which the believer possesses. The garmenture of life—wealth, learning, power, position—these are mere dross compared with life itself. The believer may do two things with his life: he may use it for self—and use it up. So used it is gone. Or he may invest it in others for Jesus' and the Gospel's sake. So used every moment of it is transmuted into the gold of the eternal kingdom—"he shall find it again."

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

(Mark ix: 1-13.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The fulfillment of a promise* (verses 1-7).—The Lord had promised that some standing with Him should not taste death till they had seen the kingdom. Verses 1-7 record the fulfillment of that promise. The transfiguration scene was not only a prophecy in action of the kingdom in its future manifestation, but *was* the kingdom in all its essential elements. These are, first, a glorified Christ, the centre; secondly, glorified saints, represented by Moses and

Elijah, one of whom entered the glory through death, the other through rapture (1 Thess. iv: 14-17); and living saints in their natural bodies on the earth, represented by Peter, James and John. When all was thus arranged, the Father's voice was heard over all.

2. *Peter forgets the great law of the Christian life* (verses 5, 6).—It was so "good" to be in that great scene that Peter quite forgot the multitude at the foot of the mountain (verse 14), and even the less privileged disciples.

3. *Jesus completes and supplants the law of the prophets* (verses 7-9). (See below.)

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

Peter had fallen into a twofold error—he had put Moses and Elijah on the same plane with Jesus, and he had forgotten both the less privileged disciples and the unsaved multitudes at the foot of the mountain (verses 14-29). Down there was a powerless church and an afflicted world. Moses was, indeed, "faithful in all his house as a servant," but "Christ as a Son, over His own house." And Christ was as immeasurably out of comparison with Moses as God ever is and ever must be out of such comparison (Heb. iii: 3-6). Both mistakes were quickly corrected. Moses and Elijah disappeared, and they saw "no man any more save Jesus only"; and He led them down from the mount of vision into the sore need of the earth below.

And that is the true use of vision. Moses, indeed, might have taught Peter that, for he had once been forty days in the glory studying "the patterns of the things in the heavens," only that he might come down again and reproduce them on the earth: "For see, saith he, that thou make all these things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount." If the servant of God is privileged to "mount up

with wings as eagles," it is only that, renewed in faith, and with vision purified, he may "run and not be weary, and walk and not faint" (Isa. xl: 31).

It is interesting to note that, largely, Peter's folly was due to a supposed necessity for saying something: "For he wist not what to say." Doubtless, then, he should have said nothing. Possibly many a church service would be quite wonderfully fruitful if the minister should humbly say: "Brethren, I have no message from God this morning. Whether it be your fault or mine I know not, but this I do know, that I have no message from Him."

But these are, after all, gleanings from the surface of this lesson; the lesson of the lesson is that in Jesus is the consummation of all the counsels of God, and that neither the church nor the world needs any "man any more save Jesus only." In Him dwells "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"; and in Him are "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. ii: 9, 3).

It is "Jesus only" for *salvation.* There is "none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved"; and upon finding the right answer to Pilate's question: "What shall I do then with Jesus who is called Christ," depends the eternal destiny of every human being to whom the offer of God's mercy in Christ Jesus is made. Even after nineteen hundred years of Gospel preaching it is still but dimly apprehended that Jesus Christ is God's only open proposition to the world. The age of law is past, and the sentence of the law rests upon every human being who is out of Christ. God is no longer saying: "If ye will enter into life, keep the commandments," but, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." And it is not only Jesus for salvation, but "Jesus *only.*" Nothing, abso-

lutely nothing but faith in Him is either required of the sinner or accepted of God.

It is "Jesus only" for sanctification. "Beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory." True it is by "the Lord the Spirit," but the Spirit effects the wonderful transformation simply by showing us His glory (John xvi: 14), and at last the final consummation of sanctification will be brought by the vision of "Jesus only," when we shall "see Him as He is" (1 John iii: 2).

It is "Jesus only" for whom we watch and wait. Having "turned to God from idols to serve the living and the true God," the believer waits, not for death, still less for judgment, but "for his Son from heaven" (1 Thess. i: 9, 10).

THE MISSION OF THE SEVENTY.

(Luke x: 1-16.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The servants of the Lord, when divinely guided, will be sent only where He is also going* (verse 1). (See below.)

2. *The divine rule for obtaining missionaries* (verse 2). The church, alas, has largely forsaken this direction, and has substituted for simple prayer to the Lord of the harvest the method of frantic appeal; of enthusiasm, too often of the flesh, induced by great conventions and inflammatory addresses. The lamentable consequences on the mission fields are too sadly well known.

3. *A great principle in the divine government* (verses 3-16).—The preaching of the Seventy was local and Israelitish in its scope (verse 1 with Matt. xv: 24), and their message was simply, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand"; "the king-

dom of God is come nigh unto you." The preaching of the church age differs in scope and message. Its scope is universal; its message, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

But the principle involved is identical: the alternative to those who reject the message is judgment (Acts xvii: 30, 31; Hebrews x: 26, 27).

3. *The identification of Christ with His messengers* (verse 16.)—Surely most comforting. If we, faithfully bearing His message, are rejected, He is rejected. If He patiently bears it, surely we may.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The mission of the Seventy was local and transitory, and their message was simply one of warning and preparation. Into whatever city the Lord sent them, He was shortly to appear also. The kingdom was "at hand," and the King, already manifested to Israel by mighty works, would soon enter their gates. Neither mission nor message was comparable in scope or power to the mission and message of the church. The Seventy were shut up to Palestine. Not even the Jews of the dispersion were to be sought. Our mission is to "all the world." The message of the Seventy was one of warning: "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." Our message is one of immediate and complete salvation: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

But in one important respect both missions are alike—the Lord, in both, identifies Himself with His servants. That is the heart of this lesson: "He that heareth you, heareth me and he that despiseth you, despiseth me."

It is beautiful to note the progress of doctrine, the enlargement and unfolding of truth in the Scriptures. The Seventy were heralds of the King. Their mission was to announce

His coming. To refuse them, therefore, was equivalent to saying, "We do not want this King." The affront, the rejection, were not at all personal to the Seventy as men, but as heralds.

But when the great commission was given to the church to go to all the world and make disciples of all nations, a closer identification is indicated: "And lo, I am *with you* all the days even unto the end of the age" (Matt. xxviii: 20). It is not that we are heralds going "before his face into every city and place whither he himself would come," but that He Himself marches with us. And if with us, surely in advance of us, as "princely Leader." When Joshua before Jericho saw a man over against him with a drawn sword in his hand, he demanded of him: "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" he answered: "Nay, but as princely captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." No wonder that Joshua "fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant?"

The Christian consciousness has sadly failed to grasp the great sense in which the Lord is "with" us "all the days." We have thought of Him as helper—as a kind of reserve force for times when the battle goes hard, and we seem about to be beaten back. That was Joshua's hope as he accosted the Stranger with the drawn sword; he saw in Him a possible reinforcement. Ah, no; he came to go before Captain Joshua; to lift all responsibility for plan and strategy and result from Joshua, leaving to him the simple, restful duty of obedience.

A subordinate Confederate general has recorded in his memoirs the immense sense of relief which came to him when, in one of the desperate battles of the Civil War, General Lee arrived upon the field. Much fighting was still to

be done, but the responsibility for all save obedience rested now upon another.

It is a great day for any servant of the Lord when he sees that.

PRAYER AND PROMISE.

(Luke xi: 1-13.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Disciples' Request* (verse 1).—Note that the disciples did not, as usually quoted, ask the Lord to teach them *how* to pray, but "to pray"—a far more vital thing. These Jews had already known how to say prayers, but they observed ("as He was praying in a certain place") that one great contrast between themselves and their Lord was that He was a man of prayer, while they were not men of prayer. That contrast exists in the church to-day. We greatly need to be taught to pray.

2. *Our Lord's Answer* (verses 2-13).—Our Lord's answer, be it remembered, is designed not so much to teach us how to pray as to make praying Christians of us. This He accomplishes by (1) laying a foundation for prayer: "When *ye* pray, say, Our Father" (See below). (2) He teaches us that all right prayer desires above all else the exaltation of God: "Hallowed be thy name." (3) Right prayer puts the general good above personal desire: "thy kingdom come." (4) Right prayer takes before God the real need, whatever it may be: "give us day by day our daily bread," etc. (5) Right prayer is definite: "Friend, lend me three loaves." (6) It must not be thought that our Father is like an earthly friend who must be importuned before he will rise and give. On the contrary, so willing is He to give that "I say unto you, ask and it shall be given you," etc.

Nothing could more grossly misinterpret this parable than to say our Lord meant to compare our Father to the sleepy, reluctant friend. Contrast, not similitude, is before us here. (7) Prayer is an exceedingly simple thing. For these seven reasons—pray.

NOTE.—It can scarcely be necessary to remind the student that the model prayer given here, and, in substance in Matt. vi: 9-13, is of use to the Christian not as a *form* of *prayer,* but only as a *lesson* on *praying.* Suited to the then state of the disciples as being still under law, and with redemption still unaccomplished, it is wholly unsuited to the Christian. 1. It is not a prayer in Christ's name (cf. John xvi: 23, 24). 2. It conditions the forgiveness of sins upon something the disciple has done, whereas the Christian is forgiven because of what Christ has done (1 John ii: 12; Acts xiii: 38, 39; Eph. iv: 32).

It should be added that the promise concerning the gift of the Spirit has been superseded by Pentecost. The Holy Spirit *has* been given, and every believer *is* indwelt by Him (1 Cor. vi: 19; Rom. viii: 9; Eph. i: 13; iv: 30).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

When ye pray, say, "Our Father," that is Jesus Christ's philosophy of prayer. The Christian is a child, and has a Father, and that Father is on the throne of the universe, therefore it is supremely rational to pray. Goldwin Smith has said that "the worst consequence of atheism is that it leaves us orphaned and guideless in a vast vortex of blind force." Unfortunately there are many who are by no means atheists whose dismal creed would only change one word in that sentence. For "blind" they would say, "ordered." The vortex remains, and the force, only the force is conceived of

—and rightly enough if we take only the natural into view—as governed by majestic laws.

That philosophy does not deny the existence, nor even the creatorship of God, but only that He has given nature certain laws which are irreversible and uncontrollable, even by the God who made them. He leaves volitional capacity to men and to angels, but has put volition out of His own reach. Having set the wheels to spinning, and the cogs to grinding, the mightiest force conceivable, the power of God, is bound hand and foot.

Prayer, say these men, is by no means useless, for the communion with God which it necessitates exerts an important reflex influence on him who prays. True, he does not get anything unless his prayer happens to coincide with some working of natural law, but as he prays he sees that it is really unimportant whether he gets anything or not.

Then there are those who conceive of God as a great decree-maker. Foreseeing everything, He has prearranged everything. If we seem to have an answer to prayer it is only because we happened to ask for something decreed. These, too, make much of the reflex benefit of prayer.

Now, over against these theories which inevitably discourage prayer, and logically would end all praying, Christ puts the great word Father. He is far from denying that God is a law-maker and a decree-maker, but He affirms a larger fact concerning God. He does indeed make laws for nature, and laws in the sphere of the moral being of man. He does indeed make and execute decrees. But, to Christ, what was a law of nature? His Father's usual way of doing things. Christ neither manifested nor taught the pseudo-scientific superstititious veneration for a law of nature. The general manager of a great railroad imposes upon it of necessity a minute and, to any one save himself, an inexorable

system of rules. Perhaps there is no better illustration of a law-regulated universe than that afforded by a great modern railway. But the rules imposed by the general manager do not make it impossible for *him* to send out an extra. On a notable occasion the president of the Pennsylvania Railroad ordered every train between Altoona and Pittsburgh side-tracked to leave the way open to him as he sped to the side of an injured son. His fatherhood was greater than his laws.

So much Christ affirms. Creatorship and law-making are so to speak swallowed up in the vastly greater fact of fatherhood.

The Old Testament saint grounded his prayer on the covenant; the New Testament saint grounds his prayer on relationship.

WATCHFULNESS.

(Luke xii: 35-48.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Believer's Attitude in View of the Possible Return of the Lord at Any Moment* (verses 35-40).—Doubtless, there is an especial word here for the converted Jewish remnant who will be the "servants" during the great tribulation —that period of universal woe (Jer. xxx: 4-8; Joel ii: 2; Matt. xxiv: 15-22), which is to be terminated by our Lord's return from His wedding to the church (Rev. xix: 7, 8), but this attitude is, if possible, more absolutely that of the church (Phil. iii: 20, 21; 1 Thess. i: 9, 10; iv: 14-17; Titus ii: 11-13).

2. *Service now is unto Joint Rulership with Christ in the Kingdom* (verses 41-44).—It cannot be too clearly held that (1) the church is not the kingdom. That so far from now

seeking subjects for the kingdom, the Lord is calling out the co-rulers over the future kingdom (1 Pet. ii: 9; Rev. i: 5, 6; 2 Tim. ii: 11, 12; Rev. iii: 21). (2) That the church is not now reigning, but suffering and serving.

3. *Any teaching which says: "My Lord delayeth His coming" is "evil"* (Matt. xxiv: 48). Verses 45, 56. The thought here evidently is that any teaching which involves such a "delay" of the Lord's return as destroys the attitude of constant "watching" and "waiting" is forbidden. How can it be possible for a servant to "watch" and "wait" for an event which cannot possibly occur till after the millennium?

4. *Penalty is in proportion to light sinned against* (verses 47, 48).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

Presumably, the present lesson was selected as the temperance lesson for the quarter because it contains the word "drunken." It is, of course, a lesson on the second coming of Christ, and only by inference a temperance lesson, and yet the inference is a perfectly sound one, for the Holy Spirit elsewhere bases a direct appeal to sobriety in respect of intoxicants on the very ground of our Lord's imminent return (1 Thess. v: 1-7). The cogency of that expectation as a motive to all right living is, therefore, the heart of this lesson. In considering it no attention will be given to discussions as to the nature and time of our Lord's return.

Let it suffice, then, to say, first of all, that which all agree in saying, that the fact of our Lord's return is invariably stated as an event for which all Christians are to "wait" and "watch." That appears sufficiently from our present lesson. Believers are to be "like unto men that wait for their Lord." That company may be "in the second watch," or, "in the third watch," but whether it be soon or late, "blessed are those

servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching."

That is the parable, and the application of it (verse 40) is natural and simple: "Be ye therefore ready also; for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." The coming of the Lord, an event predicted by the Lord Himself, but the time of which is nowhere revealed, gives, therefore, the characteristic attitude of the Christian. This is the uniform teaching. The Thessalonians are reminded that they "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven" (1 Thess. i:9, 10). Titus is taught that "the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ" (Titus ii:11-13).

But this truth is not revealed as a mere curiosity of the Divine purpose, still less as a theme for theologic controversy, but is invariably charged with the highest ethical and practical bearing. The Christian is to be sober because of it (Luke xii:45; 1 Thess. v:1-7); patient under wrong (James v:7, 8); moderate (Phil. iv:5); charitable (1 Cor. iv:5); diligent (Luke xii:42, 43); pure (1 John iv; iii:2, 3); and always abiding in Jesus (1 John ii:28).

One great peril besets this mighty motive, and of this peril we are warned. Men will say, "My Lord delayeth His coming." The picture is a household expecting the master's return, but in ignorance of the time. So far as they know, it may be at any time. The effect upon the servants of this combined certainty and uncertainty—the certainty that he is coming, the uncertainty of the time—is evident they must

be always ready. The lights must be burning and themselves girded.

But the case is supposed that one of the servants may succeed in convincing the other servants that some delay has occurred—that the master cannot come until some other event which they may observe has transpired. Obviously the lights will go out, the servants will lay aside the girdle of service, and a servant taking the place of the absent master will begin to lord it over the other servants, and to live the mere life of the senses—"to eat and to drink, and to be drunken." It is the one peril to this mighty motive against which we are warned. It is, therefore, a grievous thing to say, "my Lord delayeth His coming." As all know, precisely this thing occurred historically. For three centuries the church was in the attitude of expectation. Then, with the rise of false priesthood heading up in the papacy, the evil servant began to say: "Thy Lord delayeth His coming," and the predicted result followed. The child of God does not need to be an expert in the prophetical casuistries; he needs only to know that *any* theory which destroys his watching attitude is of the evil servant.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

(Luke xv: 11-24.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The father, not the sons, the primary object of the lesson* (verses 11, 12, 20-24).

2. *The essence of all sin, insubordination to the will of the Father* (verses 12, 13).—The implication here is evident. The younger son preferred independency to authority. It is

the core of all sin (1 John iii: 4, R. V.). The "man of sin" (2 Thess. ii: 3) is, literally, "the lawless one."

3. *The universe is not arranged to make self-will result in happiness* (verses 14-16).—The father does not follow his lawless son, but leaves him to the inevitable operation of the universal *law,* which rivets together sin and suffering. It is only *grace* which rivets together suffering and glory (Rom. viii: 17; Luke xxiv: 26).

4. *A backslider's repentance* (verses 17-19, 21).—It should be remembered that the son here is a type of the backslider, rather than of the unrenewed sinner (2 Cor. vii: 9-11).

5. *The joy of our Father God over a returning son* (verses 20-24).—What a picture! It may be commended to all backsliders for their encouragement, and to all theologians who, in a misplaced zeal for the authority of God, have defathered Him for their condemnation. What is our God and Father like? Like this father in the parable.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

This is but a half lesson. We habitually speak of Luke xv: 11-32 as "the parable of the prodigal son," but the Bible says it concerns "A certain man who had two sons." The emphasis falls neither upon the prodigal nor upon the prodigal's brother, but upon the "certain man." The two sons in their different ways bring out what is in the father's heart.

So considered, the heart of the lesson is the most surprising and altogether astounding revelation that Jesus Christ ever gave to humanity. It is only our familiarity in a superficial, often half sentimental, way with the *form* into which Jesus cast the revelation which blinds our minds to the wonder and unexpectedness of it. We are possessed to think only of the boy who went away into the far country.

Take a proof. Every one has seen either in the original or

in one of the numberless reproductions the remarkable picture by Vibert of the prodigal son. It will be remembered that it is a triptich. The great central third is a picture of the prodigal wasting his substance in the far country. It is a revel. Beautifully habited, the boy, holding aloft a wine glass, is the central figure, about whom are grouped the dancing girls and revellers. The picture at the right is still of the boy—now in his degradation and misery. Finally, at the left is a picture of the return, in which, though the father appears, the prodigal is vastly the more prominent. It illustrates the strange and all but universal misconception.

But our Lord's purpose made God the Father the subject of the parable. Let us think about this.

Remember, first of all, that the *primary* purpose of the incarnation was the revelation of God. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him" (lit. "led Him forth," John i: 18). Even the cross, and the complete atonement there accomplished, is but the supreme revelation of God in His altogether infinite love (John iii: 16; 1 John iii: 16). But there is something dazzling in the rays of the cross. *Such* love is too high for us; it overwhelms us. We feel as John did when he looked first at the throne. He could not describe Him who sat there. His description is like that of one who saw an insupportable radiance and who gropes for words—"like a jasper and a sard—like unto an emerald" (Rev. iv: 2, 3). A poor account of the glory! It reminds one of most theories of the atonement. And so our Lord will paint one picture of the Father in such wise that we may forever know what our Father God is like. Think of it, Jesus paints a portrait of God, and we poor stupid word painters, and pigment painters, imagine He was giving us a portrait of a boy!

What, then, is the Father God like? He is "like a certain man who had two sons," one of whom in utter selfishness left the father's home and broke the father's heart in the indulgences of a base sense-life, and had to be whipped by his very vices and their inevitable results into even thinking of the home he had left. And *then* he did not think of his *father,* but only of the misery of the far country, and the abundance of the father's *house.* He was like the ass who only knew his master's crib—just a picture of every sinner who has preferred the life of the senses to the fellowship of the Father, till the life of the senses has palled and brought insupportable misery upon him.

Now the question is: What will the Father God do with *such* a sinner coming with *such* a motive? The Father God will see him a long way off, and will run to meet him and kiss him. That is one portrait of the Father. Think of the other. It concerns a son who is outwardly correct and obedient, who has

> "Never strayed from the beaten path,
> Nor ever squandered his portion of gold,"

but whose heart is adamant. Living in the house with the Father, he has been farther from him than the senses and passions ever carried the poor prodigal—as far from the Father's heart as hell is from heaven. There is no character so ineffably and hopelessly vile as that of a snug pharisee. What will the Father God say to him? "Son, all that I have is thine?" And the heart of the lesson is that this is *our* Father.

CHRIST TEACHES HUMILITY.

(Mark x: 35-45.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The underlying weakness of most prayer* (verse 35).—See below.

2. *The law of exaltation in the kingdom* (verses 36-44).—Suffering and glory are inseparable. The highest places in the kingdom are for those who have drunk deepest of Christ's cup of suffering for others, and have been most conformed to Christ's death (John xviii: 11; 2 Cor. iv: 7-18; Phil. iii: 10; Col. i: 24).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

Not, if the lesson committee please, a lesson in humility, except in a very secondary sense, but, rather, a radiant light upon the pathway to the only true greatness.

A great deal of sermonic condemnation has been visited upon the sons of Zebedee because of the ambitious request: "Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory." After all, they were only a little more outspoken than the rest of us. Before any man presumes to make a text for moralistic platitudes out of James and John let him be very sure that ambition and vanity and the itch for applause and greed of place are wholly cast out of his own heart.

For, first of all, the theory of prayer propounded by these brothers is an exceedingly popular one. No theory concerning prayer is more widely taught to-day than that if we can only bring enough faith to bear on God. He *must* "do for us" whatever we desire. Nay, more, we are instructed that if we cannot come by this all victorious faith, the fault, the

most grievous fault, is ours. Our failure to harness omnipotence to our orphanage, or our school, or our mission, is proof positive that some secret sin is preying upon the very vitals of our spirituality—for Bildad the Shushite is always with us. "If thou wert pure and upright, surely now he would awake for thee and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous" (Job viii: 6).

At bottom all this may cloak a lust for spiritual eminence, the true phrasing of which would be: "Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever *we* shall desire." The very core of true prayer is utter submission to God's better wisdom, more perfect love.

Note with care our Lord's answer. He by no means denies that there are real distinctions, veritable thrones of power in His kingdom. Rather He points out the way to them. But it is not the way of the world. The world's great ones exercise lordship over them. The whole desirableness of earthly greatness lies in the power to make others serve the possessors of that greatness. Strip a king of his authority, take from him his palaces, his armies, his servants, his pomp and state, and, except for the vanity of his empty title, he would fling away his crown. That kind of greatness Jesus neither desired nor offered to others.

And yet He, too, was on His way to a throne, and an earthly throne at that (Matt. i: 1; ii: 1-6; Luke i: 31-33; Acts xv: 16, 17); and not only so, but part of His mission to earth was to gather out from amongst the sons of men those who will sit with Him on His throne (Rev. iii: 21; Luke xiv: 12, 19). Indeed, those very men, James and John, are to have thrones of peculiar distinction (Matt. xix: 27, 28).

Now, then, was their petition amiss? No doubt their thought was of an immediate setting up of the Messianic

kingdom, and of obtaining such a place in that kingdom as would be the gratification of a mere fleshly vanity. But, deeper than their misconception of the time of the manifestation of the kingdom was their misconception of the moral conditions of that kingdom. They thought to gain its distinctions by mere royal favor; they had to learn that those distinctions are not in the *gift* of the King. His salvation is indeed a free gift, but every crown, every plaudit, must be earned. The kingdom distinctions are offered only as a reward for suffering and service (Luke xix: 12-19; 1 Cor. iii: 11-15; ix: 19-25; 2 Tim. iv: 7, 8; Rev. ii: 10; Rom. viii: 18). This is the twofold lesson of co-crucification (verses 38, 39) with Jesus, and of accepting as the only highway to the throne the path of lowly service. It was Christ's own pathway, and along that *via crucis* must all pass who would sit at His right hand.

THE PASSOVER.

(Matt. xxvi: 17-30.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The guidance of Christ over our service extends to the smallest details* (verses 17-19).—We are accustomed to refer the greater decisions of our lives to the Lord's better wisdom, but we are equally accustomed to decide in our own wisdom the smaller problems of service. When we remember that the most important consequences often follow apparently unimportant actions, we should be warned to ask Him concerning even so small matters as: "Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?"

2. *The latent possibilities of evil in every heart* (verses 22-24).—See below.

3. *The meaning of the Lord's supper* (verses 26-29).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The Passover and the Lord's Supper have very much in common; indeed, the latter feast may be regarded as the continuation, with larger meanings, of the earlier. Both alike are memorial—the one perpetuating the memory of the great deliverance in Egypt; the other of the great Deliverer of whom the Jewish passover lamb was but a type. Both commemorate a deliverance by blood alone (Exodus xii: 13; Heb. ix: 13-15; x: 10). Both speak of that which renders secure from judgment all, however guilty, who apply the blood by faith. Both present a lamb—the best expression in nature of innocency and non-resistance to evil.

The parallels might be farther drawn out, but these must suffice. For our concern is not so much to expound the lesson as to find in it that truth which is either uniquely taught here, no other Scripture having it; or (which is equally to the point), that truth better taught here than elsewhere. So considered, must we not say that it lies in that sudden overwhelming wave of self-knowledge which forced to all their lips the awful question concerning the betrayer, "Lord, is it I?" Mark it well—this is a final question. Just as the tremendous miracle of the resurrection of Jesus Christ makes credible all other and lesser miracles, so this question, "Lord, is it I?" if answered affirmatively render credible all the testimonies of Scripture concerning the incurable evil of the natural heart. Always, in all spheres, the greater includes the less. If we all, then, left to ourselves and to the unhindered work of our *own* hearts, are capable of the consummate infamy and crime of the betrayal of Jesus Christ, then such small matters as theft, murder, adultery, covetousness, and the like may at once be acknowledged as latent possibilities in every heart of man (Mark vi: 21-23; Rom. iii: 10-18; Gal. v: 19-21). What is certain is that under the divine

searchlight every one of the apostles saw the crowning crime to be possible to him; and they were at least as good as we.

"Lord, is it I?" It is related of a great preacher that, having to preach in the Massachusetts penitentiary, he was stricken dumb as he saw the long lines of fellow-men clad in the livery of shame, shamble, lock-step, to their places in the chapel. For he said, "How may I preach to *these* men? What know I of thieves and forgers and murderers? I have done none of these things. Between them and myself is a chasm hell deep which I can neither overpass to get to them, nor they to get to me." And then God showed him his own natural heart. Down through layers of Puritan tradition, of moral habit, inherited from generations of God-fearing ancestors, the revealing ray shot and lighted up the real heart underneath, and the man of God saw there the possibility of every crime represented in the long rows of furtive-eyed, low-browed, bestial-faced humanity before him—and then he could preach to them as a sinful man to sinful men.

"Lord, is it I?" Every one of us must ask this question. We are in nothing better than Peter and James and John. "Lord, is it I?" Is it I who am now living in thy very presence, whose fellowship is my delight, whose service is my joy, whose words are my daily food—is it I who, in some unwatchful moment, am to betray thee? "Lord, is it I" who am reserved to the slow spiritual paralysis of going on with the outward form of communion and service after the glowing heart of it all is dead, who am at last in some kiss of final falseness to betray thee? "Lord, is it I?"

CHRIST'S TRIAL BEFORE PILATE.

(Mark xv: 1-15.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *Jesus and Pilate* (verses 1-5).—See below.

2. *Jesus and Barabbas* (verses 6-15).—The foundation doctrine of redemption is vicarious sacrifice, and in all Scripture there is no better illustration of substitution. (1) Barabbas means "son of his father," and that describes us all. By nature we are all sons of our father, Adam. (2) Barabbas was justly condemned to die. He was not on probation to see if he would become a good man. The law had condemned him; he was awaiting execution (Rom. iii: 19; John iii: 18-36). (3) He was unconditionally released simply because another was dying in his place. (4) He did nothing whatever to secure his pardon but accept it.

3. *The Final Testing of Man Under Law* (verses 6-15). —For centuries man had been under the testing of the law. What was the result? The religious leaders of the nation to whom the law was given could not discern the Lord of glory, though they were expecting Him, and had a wonderful mosaic portrait of Him in the law and the prophets. Neither could they discern perfect moral loveliness, but clamored for the release of a murderer and the crucifixion of Jesus.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

It is not easy to say what is the deepest heart of things here. In a very supreme sense, of course, Jesus is the central figure, as in any scene in which He appears. But so incontestable is His prominence that often it is not the fact to be insisted upon—it goes without saying. Often the real question is: What will this or that man or body of men do

concerning Jesus who is in the midst? For the Incarnate Word, like the written Word, is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and His very presence compels disclosures of what is passing in the inmost being of the bystander.

In this lesson the human interest centers upon Pontius Pilate.

Think of Pilate. When a famous skeptic saw Munckacsy's "Christ Before Pilate" he said with a sigh, after looking long at that great picture, "The artist has reversed the positions of these men; he has painted, not Christ before Pilate, but Pilate before Christ." And so it was. One pities Pilate while condemning him. Compelled to admit the sinlessness of Jesus, and therefore urged by the law, by his conscience, and by the importunities of his wife to deal justly, he yet dealt unjustly. Even his inclination seems to have been strongly on the side of Jesus; he "sought how he might set Him free."

Do not imagine that there has been but one Pontius Pilate in the personal history of Jesus Christ. Alas, there have been countless millions of Pilates during the nineteen centuries in which Christ has been on trial in the forum of conscience and of reason. When Pilate said: "I find no fault in Him," he acknowledged a fact unique in human history. Of no other human being could that justly be said. Jesus alone among the sons of men has been without fault. All other goodness has been flawed with badness; all other greatness has been linked with littleness; Jesus is the only sinless one. And so Pilate believed. So all men who know the story of His life have believed and do believe.

So, believing, Pilate pronounced the sentence which sent Him to the cross; so believing thousands are "crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh." In what essential re-

spect do they differ from the Roman governor of infamous memory?

Three possible courses were open before the first Pilate—have been and are open to all succeeding Pilates. The first course was the obvious one of evasion and delay. Catching at a word (Luke xxiii: 6) Pilate sought to shift upon Herod the decision for or against Jesus. But no, it was Pilate's question, and he could not pass it over to another. Again Jesus stood before Pilate; evasion had failed. Then two courses only remained—to act upon the logic of his own admission of the faultlessness of Jesus, or, in deliberate violation of conscience, to cast Jesus out. He chose the latter course. Why? Because it seemed to accord with his present interests. To side with Jesus might, in the then precarious favor in which he stood with Cæsar, mean the sacrifice of his worldly prospects. To incur at that time the enmity of the Jews might mean the sacrifice of his governorship, and he was not prepared to do right by Jesus at the cost of worldly prosperity. For the present prosperity of a questionable business, for a dance, or a game at cards, or a sensual play, millions are rejecting that very Jesus whom they profess to admire and to find without fault.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

(Mark xv: 22-29.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Sure Word of Prophecy Fulfilled* (verses 22-29).—The twenty-second Psalm is a picture of the crucifixion painted with photographic minuteness of detail by the Spirit of God more than 1,000 years before the cross was set up.

2. *The inescapable Alternative* (verses 26-32).—"Let

Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross." "He saved others, Himself He cannot save." Most true! that was the actual alternative. He had descended from the cross; if He had permitted His own rescue by the twelve legions of angels, not a human soul would have seen the face of God in peace.

3. *The Forsaken Son* (verses 33-36).—See below.

4. *The Voluntary Death of Jesus* (verse 37).—Make no mistake here. Jesus, even in the agonies of the cross, did not die of necessity. He "gave up" His spirit.

5. *The Rent Veil* (verse 38).—Only one instructed in the tabernacle types can appreciate what that meant. Briefly, so long as the veil between the holy place and the holy of holies remained, the way into God's presence was impossible for all humanity save only one man, the high priest, and he could enter but once each year. The rent veil made "a new and living way" into God's presence for all men who would come by that way (John xiv:6; Heb. ix:1-12; x:19-22).

6. *A Convinced Spectator* (verse 39).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The heart of this lesson must be found in an adequate answer to Jesus' desolate cry from the cross, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The emphasis must be put on the personal pronoun "thou" and "me." "Why hast *Thou* forsaken *Me?*" The cry was appropriated by our Lord from the twenty-second Psalm, the Psalm of crucifixion (see verses 14-18), and in that Psalm the argument implied in the words of Jesus is more drawn out. "Our fathers trusted in thee; they trusted, and thou didst deliver them; they cried unto thee and were delivered." Why were the fathers, though faulty and sinful men, delivered when they cried unto Jehovah, when the sinless One, whose de-

light had ever been the father's will, was forsaken of Jehovah in the extremity to which perfect obedience had brought Him? The difficulty is a real one, and any adequate theodicy must meet it. God is the moral Governor of the universe, and in all the ages of His rule over men He had but One sinless and perfectly holy subject—His own incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. Why should the only human being who ever deserved the entire approval of God be abandoned to the whim of a despot, the insensate rage of a mob, the cold hatred of bigots, and, so abandoned, be forsaken of God in the extremity of a cruel death?

Let it be repeated—the difficulty is a real one. For, if mobs and despots and bigots are supreme in authority over perfect goodness, then God has resigned, or is a myth. There *is* no Supreme Ruler.

For all other suffering save the suffering of Jesus Christ many reasons may be found in perfect harmony with both the goodness and justice of God. It is eternally *right* that God, in Plato's phrase, should "rivet together" sin and suffering; and furthermore, suffering is often, in the moral government of God, both purifying and remedial. Suffering is the crucible in which dross is burnt out, that the gold of God may be pure.

> "'Tis suffering sublimes the soul
> So perfect peace may come at last,
> And I shall know God's kind intent
> When these sharp pains are past."

But in Jesus Christ was no dross of Adamic nature, no sin to which suffering might justly be "rivetted." And not only so, but even those who deserved to suffer were delivered if they cried to Jehovah. Amongst all the suffering sons of men Jesus only was forsaken." Why?

Men have thought the doom of the wicked heathen to reflect upon the moral government of God, but here, forsaken of God is no filthy heathen sinner, but the holy Son of God. Let this be accounted for.

And just here is the necessary test of any theory of the atonement—does it account for a holy Son forsaken in a cruel death? If Jesus dies only to afford such a spectacle of moral grandeur as must forever enchain the hearts of men, and so transform human character, then the forsaking of him by God meant that God disowned the act, dissociated Himself from it. If the cross meant only a supreme manifestation of divine love, then the Father could not have been absent. But if Christ were indeed the sacrifice for the guilt of the world; if, in infinite compassion toward man, and honor toward God, He was in one supreme act of suffering doing right by the moral order of the universe, and putting everlasting shame and ignominy upon sin, then indeed we may understand that God could not associate Himself with human guilt, and that the forsaken One suffered the forsaking that we might never be forsaken.

CHRIST RISEN.

(Matt. xxviii: 1-15.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Empty Tomb* (verses 1-6).—From the very moment when Jesus "gave up the ghost" in expiating our sins His triumph began. His bones were not suffered to be broken; His incorruptible body lay in a new tomb; and, when the days in the bowels of the earth were ended an angel rolled back the stone that the true Rock might come forth.

2. *The First Message of the New Dispensation* (verses 7, 8).—The incarnation ministry of Jesus began with an invitation, "come and see"; the resurrection began with a message, "go quickly and tell" (John i: 39; Matt. xxviii: 7).

3. *The Reward of Those Who "Go Quickly and Tell"* (verses 8-10).—"As they went, Jesus met them."

4. *The Impotence of Hatred* (verses 11-15).—The foolish lie is repudiated to-day by all candid readers of the narrative; the resurrection is believed by millions.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The crucifixion of Christ has many meanings, but they all converge upon one great fact—the expiation of man's guilt. But the resurrection of Christ, which also has many meanings, cannot be interpreted by a phrase or a definition. Let us, then, gather up into one view the greater meanings of the resurrection and find in them the heart of that great event.

The resurrection of Christ *is a fact*. It has been said with truth that no event in human history is better authenticated. The evidence upon which an intelligent faith in the stupendous miracle of the resurrection of Christ rests is summarized by Paul in 1 Cor. xv: 4-8. (1) The Scriptures required the resurrection (Psa. xvi: 8, 11; Acts ii: 23-32). (2) After His resurrection He "was seen of Cephas" (Luke xxiv: 33, 34). This is not only a touching illustration of the shepherd work of the risen Lord in seeking first a sheep that had strayed, but is an evidential fact of great importance. (3) "Then of the twelve." These were the men who knew Him best, whom it would have been impossible to deceive. Remember, too, that one of the twelve, Thomas, was utterly incredulous and was convinced only by actual evidence. (4)

"After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once." The witnesses were not only persons who knew the Lord intimately, but they were also numerous, and of a character which excludes the thought of imposture. (5) "After that he was seen of James." It will be remembered that James was the Lord's brother. (6) "Then (again) of all the apostles." The fact of the resurrection does not rest upon one fleeting or phantasmal view of the risen Christ, but upon many and long continued interviews with intervals for reflection. (7) "And last of all he was seen of me also." The testimony of Paul is of final and unanswerable weight. He was a prejudiced and unwilling witness; he saw the risen Lord years after His ascension; he "suffered the loss of all things" because convinced that Jesus was indeed risen from the dead.

The resurrection of Jesus *affirms the truth of His claims.* If Jesus had been but a self-deceived enthusiast honestly supposing Himself to be the Son of God and the Messiah, His death would have ended His claims, for He Himself appealed beforehand to His resurrection as the one great "sign" by which His demand upon the faith and obedience of the world should rest. God could not have raised from the dead an impostor, or a mere religious enthusiast.

The resurrection of Christ *confirms our justification.* He went into death under the burden of our sins; that He rose from the dead is the evidence that His sacrifice was accepted on our behalf.

The resurrection of Christ is the *proof of the believer's resurrection.* "If Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" (1 Thess. iv: 14). This certainly it is which gives us triumph even in the brief of bereavement; because of this we "sorrow not as others, which have no hope," for "then shall be

brought to pass the saying which is written, death is swallowed up in victory."

CHRIST THE LIFE AND LIGHT OF MEN.

(John i: 1-18.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Eternal Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.*—The words of John's sublime introduction admit of no qualification nor evasion. They assert in the most positive terms not only His preëxistence, which some amongst Unitarians accept, but His absolute Deity (verses 1-4).

2. *The Uncomprehended One* (verses 5, 10, 11).—What a proof of the total alienation of the world from God, that it did not know the Creator when He appeared. And this, be it remembered, was the religious world—the very people who had the Scriptures! Just as the world of culture knew not God by "wisdom," so the Jewish world knew not God by religion.

3. *The Forerunner and His Mission* (verses 6, 7, 8, 15).—It cannot be too clearly held that John the Baptist was not a preacher of the Gospel, but a herald of Him who was to create the Gospel.

4. *The Conditions of the New Sonship* (verses 12, 13).—If no other passage or teaching of Scripture contradicted the current teaching that all men are sons of God, these verses would suffice. That all men are by creation the "offspring" of God, that is, different essentially from the beasts, is most true (Acts xvii: 20), but "sonship" is a word of position and of relationship. All the born ones are "offspring of God"—only the born again ones are the sons of God.

5. *The Incarnation* (verse 14).—The modern teaching is that in the incarnation "flesh" was first, and that afterward this Man became one in whom God became manifest in a larger sense than had ever been true of any other man. But the Scripture says that the Word was first, and "became" flesh.

6. *The New Dispensation* (verse 17).—The disjunctive conjunction "but" shows the relation of the Mosaic to the Christian dispensation. The latter is in contrast to the first.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

What mortal shall assume to say what is the heart of things in this lesson? Bengel called these verses "the sanctum sanctorum of the Bible." They hold such great doctrines as the personality and transcendence of God, as against pantheism; His unity, as against polytheism; His plurality, as against unitarianism; His true incarnation, as against all forms of gnosticism, whether ancient or modern; and His power of self-revelation, as against agnosticism.

But all of these stupendous truths are also taught elsewhere in Scripture. We are not, therefore, to find the cure of this lesson in the fact of their restatement here. Is it not to be found in the one word, revelation? And, since the revelation is unto the end that God may be known and worshipped, must we not say that the heart of this lesson is the personal revelation of God?

There are, then, three thoughts for our learning:

First. The revelation of a personal God. Our God is neither a theological abstraction, a mere bundle of attributes, nor yet a scientific abstraction, a mere form of Force; nor yet a philosophical abstraction, a Somewhat coextensive with, and indistinguishable from, matter. He is a Person, and we were made in His likeness and image.

Secondly. He reveals Himself in this final and supreme way in a Person. The Word, who in the beginning *was* (not became, or began) God, incarnated Himself in a Man who began a human life as we began ours, and lived for thirty-three years a divine life in human conditions, not heavenly conditions.

Thirdly. This divine life, under human conditions, was to the end that we who are persons might know, love, worship and obey the divine Person God. Now, any reverent human person may thus come into personal relations with the divine Person. In no other way could we really know Him. All previous revelations were about Him, the personal revelation was Himself. But in revealing Himself He also revealed the perfect man. What is God like? Like Christ. What is perfected humanity like? Like Christ. Ah, how limited and poor is our vision of divine truth! Have we really believed that redemption is not only *from* the immeasurable debasement of humanity in hell, but *unto* the conformation of humanity to Christlikeness in glory?

THE WITNESS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST TO JESUS.

(John i: 19-34.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *John's Self-abnegation* (verses 19-23).—No finer example can be found in all Scripture of the right relation toward the public of a servant of God. John would neither take the place belonging of right to Christ in the public mind, nor would he claim for himself any other exalted position. To be a "voice" was enough for him.

2. *John's First Testimony* (verses 24-29).—Questioned

as to his authority for introducing a new ordinance, viz: the baptism of repentance, John connects his actions with his work as the forerunner of One mightier than himself.

3. *John's Second Testimony* (verse 29).—See "Heart."

4. *John's Third Testimony* (verses 32, 33).—John had seen the convincing fact of the descent upon Jesus of the Holy Spirit.

5. *John's Fourth Testimony* (verse 34).—"This is the Son of God." The student should add to these John's testimony, as reported by Matthew, against the formal religion of the time, and to Jesus as the baptizer with the Holy Ghost.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The great word of this lesson is, the word "witness." John was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of the Light. We have, therefore, as the open heart of the lesson the word witness; and this in three ways:—witness bearing as the *method* of the new dispensation of "grace and truth," which Christ brought in; Christ Himself as the *object* of the witnessing; and one particular fact about Christ as the *message* of the witnessing.

First. The idea of building up the kingdom of God by means of testimony was one of the most striking of the new ideas of the new dispensation. Mosaism was built up by the natural increase of a family, the family of Abraham. Every Hebrew child was in the Theocracy just by virtue of having Hebrew parents. The Law never had a missionary. From Sinai came no command: "Go ye into all the earth and preach the law to every creature." But witnessing is the peculiar method of this dispensation. From the ascension to this day, Christ has no other way of winning men but by the testimony of Spirit-filled witnesses (Acts i: 8).

Secondly. That testimony concerns a Person, not primarily, an ethical system, nor even a body of doctrine, still less a church, but Himself, Jesus the Christ. At no point has the church more conspicuously failed in her responsibility than just there. Rome presents an ecclesiastical system, Protestantism a thousand theological systems, in the place of Jesus Christ. The Lord made Himself the one issue. "Whom say ye that I the Son of man am?" "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me hath everlasting life." "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that believeth not the Son hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Thirdly. The message about Christ centers with tremendous emphasis on one definite act—His sacrificial death. Read the twenty-one Christian Epistles, seeking carefully for the references to His earth-life as the emphatic fact concerning Him. You will find five brief, unemphatic passages. Read them again for references to His atoning death. You will find them by scores. Then enter the churches and hear the sermons; or read the so-called Christian literature of the day. How often will you find the chief emphasis put upon the atoning death of Christ? Is it not time to come back to the Apostolic testimony? "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

HIS FIRST DISCIPLES.

(John i: 35-51.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Very First Disciples* (verses 36-39).—They heard a true testimony; they followed; they abode.

2. *The First "Finder"* (verses 40-42).—The man who

had heard, followed, and abode, quite naturally ran to tell. Have you complied with the three conditions? We do not know that Andrew became a great preacher, but that day he brought a great preacher to Jesus.

3. *The Great "Finder" at Work* (verse 43).—You are going to meet many a soul in heaven whose testimony will be, "No man cared for my soul, save the Man of Calvary only." Philip, the Jew with the Gentile name, seems to have been a pretty dull disciple (John xiv: 8, 9); perhaps no one but Jesus would have thought him worth finding.

3. *The Third "Finder"* (verses 44-46).—Note his simple but sublime testimony: "We have found HIM." Philip could not answer Nathaniel's hard question, but he could suggest a good way out: "Come and see."

4. *The New Testimony to Christ* (verses 47-49).—John had already witnessed to Jesus as the Son of God; Nathaniel adds, as an instructed Jew who knew the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. vii: 8-16), "the King of Israel."

5. *The Promise of Greater Things* (verses 50, 51).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

We have, first, a precious lesson in Christian service. It began that day by Jordan in a certain specific testimony, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Did you ever notice that John the Baptist never explains his messages? That day, so significant as the day which saw the first disciples gathered to Christ, John did not explain what he meant by calling Christ "the Lamb of God." Every Jew knew that he was pointing to Jesus as the fulfiller of the sacrificial types—knew that every lamb sacrificed from the first Passover till that day pointed forward to a coming One. The application is obvious: the first secret of successful service is to point to Christ as the Sacrifice, the sin-bearer, the atone-

ment maker. All true knowledge of Christ begins at the cross. Afterward we may go back to the cradle, and follow the sinless feet, and contemplate the great example.

And the second lesson in successful service is that only one who has been with Jesus can win men to Him. One may be saved and yet know but little of the blessedness of communion with Christ. Personal faith is commonly the result of the testimony of another. John bore witness to Christ as the Lamb of God, and John and Andrew followed Him. But more: they "abode with Him." Belief made them disciples, abiding made them soul seekers, and soul winners.

The third lesson in service is that it should begin with what is nearest. Andrew went after his own brother, Simon. Too many people whose hearts begin to be stirred toward service, quiet their aroused consciences with great plans of of what they will do when they are somewhere else. Mr. Moody used to tell his boys and girls at Mount Hermon and Northfield that one who could do no service right where they might happen to be, would not do service anywhere. And note that Andrew was not satisfied with telling his brother about Jesus. He "brought him to Jesus."

The fourth lesson is that Jesus Himself is actively at work with His servants. It was Jesus who found Philip. The Lord is constantly making converts. Many a saint in glory owes his conversion to no human agency. A Bible, a sincere reader of the Bible, the risen Christ, and the Holy Spirit—these are enough.

Underneath the last seven verses of the lesson is a wonderful dispensational picture upon which there is no room to dwell. It is prophetic of the future conversion of the Jewish remnant in the last days, and of the national conversion of Israel after our Lord's return.

THE FIRST MIRACLE IN CANA.

(John ii: 1-11.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Social Christ* (verses 1, 2).—With a world's salvation for His mission, and with but little more than three years for testimony, our blessed Lord could find time, and think it worth while, to share and increase the innocent social joy of a wedding. A lesson, surely, to those who think such things "wordly." The definition of "the world" in the bad sense in which that term is used in Scripture needs enlarging in the minds of many truly earnest, but narrow minded Christians. The "world" in the bad sense is that kingdom of Satan here in the earth, the badge of which is ostentation, or the desire for things not for the ministry there may be in them to man's manifold being, but for mere display, pride, and conspicuity; and the rewards of which are present wealth, power, or position. At the heart of it lies self-exaltation. Of *that* world no follower of the Lord Jesus should ever be a part. But to condemn eating and drinking as part of a large and beautiful social life, and to reprobate surrounding such occasions as weddings, birthdays, anniversaries and the like with joyous companionship, is to be holier than Christ, and to go back to John the Baptist.

2. *The Manifestation of His Glory* (verses 3-11).—See "Heart."

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The heart of this lesson is plainly indicated in verse 11. The "sign" was a manifestation of "His glory."

Perhaps there is no more difficult word in Scripture than the word "glory." And, as in the case of the word "world,"

the difficulty arises from the diverse uses of the word. Sometimes it means outward splendor, merely, as, "The kingdoms of this world and the glory of them" (Luke iv: 6). Sometimes the word is used of that superhuman radiance which announces the immediate presence of Deity (Ex. xvi: 10; 1 Kings viii: 11). Sometimes the word is used of the people's praises of God (Matt. xv: 21). But always the fundamental idea is the manifestation of Deity in some or all of His excellences. We, for example, glorify God when we make known in life or testimony "the excellences of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light."

With this explanation we are prepared to see how, in making the water wine Christ "manifested His glory." It was a creative act, and creative power belongs to God alone. The "sign," however, had a purpose beyond the demonstration of the fact that in Jesus of Nazareth God was Himself among men. In the structure of John's Gospel the announcement of a new truth is commonly accompanied by an illustrative miracle. In John viii: 12, for example, our Lord says, "I am the light of the world." In the succeeding chapter He performed the illustrative miracle of giving sight to a man born blind.

So here He prefaces the great teaching on the new birth by turning water into wine. The "sign" at the wedding feast, therefore, represents Him as the Author of the new creation (1 Cor. xv: 45-49).

Still another "glory" of our Lord was manifested at the wedding feast. Here, at the outset of His great work, He revealed Himself as the social Christ. It is the characteristic of the new dispensation that all innocent human joy is sanctified in Christ. John the Baptist, the last of the Old Testament prophets and saints, was an ascetic. He came

neither eating nor drinking. Christ as He said of Himself, came eating and drinking. He was constantly found in human habitations. He sought the family. Puritanism has woefully hidden the social Christ.

NICODEMUS.

(John iii: 1-15.)

I. The Analysis.

1. *The Candid Inquirer* (verses 1, 2).—Nicodemus has been, not without reason, called "the best natural character in Scripture."

2. *The Necessity, Mystery and Means of the New Birth* (verses 3-15).

3. *The Outrageous Omission.*—The august International Lesson Committee not infrequently does foolish things, and as frequently leaves wise things undone; but to stop this lesson short of verse 16 is inexplicable. That verse is the central verse of the Bible, "the Gospel in little," as Luther called it. There certainly is a personal Satan, and in his activity he often beguiles good and well meaning men. He hates John iii: 16.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The heart of this lesson lies, I think, in the two imperatives of verses 7 and 14. "Ye MUST be born again." "The Son of Man MUST be lifted up."

First. The imperative of life—"ye must be born again." There is no going around a divine imperative. The "must's" of God are final. Let us not suppose that they are therefore arbitrary. Not one of the divine imperatives is arbitrary. Something "must" be, not because of a whim of the

Sovereign of the universe, but because it could not be otherwise in a moral universe.

The imperative of the new birth is a "must" because of two facts in the being of fallen man. He is spiritually dead, and "must" have life if he is to know and enjoy God (Eph. ii: 1; Col. ii: 13; Eph. iv: 11); and his nature is depraved. It is not to be understood that man by the fall has lost immortality, but only that he is "alienated *from the life of God.*" It is that life which our Lord calls "eternal life"; eternal being a word of quality, not of duration, primarily. Eternal life is imparted by the new birth, and without that life man could not know God (John xvii: 3).

The *second* reason why man "must" be born again is that his human Adamic nature is hopelessly corrupted. It is "flesh." What Christ, who knew what was in man (John ii: 25), thought of the old nature may be learned from Mark vii: 21-23. By the new birth a new nature is imparted (1 Peter 1: 23; 2 Peter 1: 4).

Equally unavoidable is the second of these divine imperatives, the imperative of death. For man, whom Jesus came to save, was not only "dead," "alienated from the life of God," and incurably corrupt by nature, but he was also personally a guilty violator of the divine law. He was a sinner. He had despised the holy will of God, and was a rebel in a moral universe. A holy God could not ignore the guilt of man, nor make light of it. Something "must" be done to express the divine abhorrence of sin; to express the divine love for the sinner; to liberate the "eternal life" which was in Christ (John i: 4), so that it might be imparted to the redeemed (John xii: 24); to pay to the broken law of God its inescapable penalty of death (Rom. vi: 23; Gal. iii: 16, 18), and to draw Godward those who were lost (John xii: 32).

And all of this, and who shall say how much more, was wrought by the lifting up of the Son of man.

AT JACOB'S WELL.

(John iv: 5-14.)

I. The Analysis.

(1) *The Human Christ,* verses 1-2. Our adorable Lord was as truly human as He was truly Divine. As we are wearied in His service, though never wearied of it, so was He in His Father's service.

(2) The lesson in wayside service, verses 7-26. With their not common fatuousness the lesson committee fail to give us the whole of even this brief story, so we must go beyond the strict lesson limits to get it. NOTE:—(*a*) That weariness does not keep the model Servant from working. (*b*) That the Wise Servant began at some point of common interest, verse 7. (*c*) That He refused to be drawn into a sectarian discussion, verses 8-10. (*d*) That He responded to the woman's first gleam of personal interest by touching her conscience, verses 16-18. (*e*) That He swept aside ceremonialism and mere religiousness as the resource of an awakened conscience, verses 19-24. Too many moderns would have said: "Join the church, and live right." (*f*) That He revealed Himself as the alone resource for a sinner, verses 25-26.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The heart of this lesson is to be found in the contrast between Jacob's well and the upspringing fountain. Jacob's well is the Law, the old order of laborious ceremonial, the old legal system of personal merit by obedience. The water

in the well was good, but the well was deep (verse 11). Every drop gained from that well cost effort. Bucket by bucket, a little at a time—that was the law of the Well at its very best. But Jacob's well had come to stand for mere traditionalism in religion, for mere intolerance of new light. "Art thou greater than our father Jacob?" was the woman's answer to him who was speaking of the upspringing water. As a matter of fact, Jacob was the father of the Samaritans in no real sense. The Samaritans of our Lord's time were a hybrid race, outside of real Judaism. Jesus was careful to set that right: "Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews." Spiritually, the Samaritans drawing water from Jacob's well were precisely in the position of modern Gentile believers who put themselves under the Law; conceiving that as Christians, the Law is their rule of life. That is the very error against which the Spirit by Paul wrote the Epistle to the Galatians.

The upspringing fountain is, first of all, the Holy Spirit Himself, indwelling the believer; and then the nine-fold "fruit of the spirit," which is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." And that fruit of the Spirit is Christian character. Under the Law, character is sought to be formed by habits of obedience to a rule of life—thou shalt, and thou shalt not. The formula is: "Our choices make our habits, and our habits form our characters." That is drawing water out of Jacob's well. It is that "other" Gospel, of which the Apostle speaks in Galatians. It is Samaritanism—that is, neither pure Judaism nor pure Christianity.

Christianity is not a kind of pump in Jacob's well, helping us to draw life out of the law; it is the Spirit of life, and the life of the Spirit implanted in, and outflowing from the believer himself. That is the least understood fact of Chris-

tianity to-day, after nineteen hundred years of preaching. "The water that I shall give shall be in him a fountain of water, springing up into everlasting life."

The contrast between Jacob's well and the upspringing fountain is just the contrast between the VII of Romans and the VIII. In the former, a believer is in an agony of effort to do something under the law of merit, the goodness of God. In the later, a believer is, by the indwelling Spirit, made "free from the law," and so finds that the righteous ness of the law is fulfilled (not "by," but) "in" him as he walks after the Spirit.

It is very remarkable that the Epistle to the Ephesians, after stating in the first three chapters the exalted position into which the believer is brought by grace through faith, in turning to the walk that should characterize one in such a position, gives as the test of the walk, and as that which gives it its distinctive character, not the law, but the new position: "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called"; "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth."

The transformation of Christian experience from the average one of painfully drawing blessings out of Jacob's well, to the triumphant one of bearing the fruit of the Spirit, is effected by two acts, one of faith, one of the will. The act of faith is just to believe that the Spirit *does* dwell within (1 Cor. vi: 19). The act of the will is just to live in yieldedness to the Spirit.

THE SECOND MIRACLE OF CANA.

(John iv: 43-54.)

I. The Analysis.

1. The prophet without honor, verses 43-44. Note *why* He was without honor; He was a *Prophet*. A prophet was never sent to Israel except in times of declension, and every prophet's message was one of stern rebuke.

2. The miracle at Cana, verses 46-54. See Heart of the Lesson.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The power of the Word of the Lord is the emphatic fact of this lesson. Many were healed by our Lord's touch and presence, but the healing of the daughter of the Syro-Phœnician woman, and of the Nobleman's son, were wrought by the Word of an absent Lord. Doubtless this has its dispensational significance, for these suppliant parents were Gentiles, and the great Gentile church is being called out and saved by the preaching of the Word of a Lord, who is, personally at the right hand of the Father, and invisible, save to the eye of faith. But we are concerned with the practical rather than the dispensational aspects of truth.

So considered, we have here the power of the Word in two ways. And first, the power of the Word to heal. We are saved simply by believing in Christ as He is presented through the Word of God. "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son" (1 John v: 10). We are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Peter 1: 23). Apart from the Word of God, we know nothing whatever about Christ. It is true that the believer's ex-

perience accords with the word, for: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself," but even after belief, we still need the Word to interpret to us that very experience which the Lord gives to his own.

There is great need amongst Christian workers of a revival of faith in the power of the simple Word of God. His promises concerning the Word have ever been confirmed by his providences. Multitudes have been convicted and converted by the silent power of the Scriptures, quite apart from argument or emotional appeal.

And the incident recorded in our lesson marks another way in which the Word has power. The healing Word, "Go thy way; thy son liveth," was spoken at one o'clock P. M. Capernaum, where the healing took effect, was about twenty miles away. The late Prof. Curtis rode from Cana to Capernaum easily in a little more than four hours. The Nobleman might have been back and by his son's side by five o'clock, yet we read that it was the next day before he went home. What kept that father, but a moment before Jesus spake the life-restoring Word so filled with fear and distress about his son, quietly at Cana all those hours? Nothing, clearly, but a new born faith in the power of Jesus' word, and a new born love for Jesus Himself. Nothing less than this could have kept that father from the bedside of his son.

And here again the experience of millions confirms the truth of the incident; for the Christian's assurance rests on the word of God and on that alone. We are saved by believing in Christ according to the Word of God, and we have quietness and assurance by believing what the Word says about the finished work of Christ. When the Word says: "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things,

from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses," the heart of the believer has assurance.

AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA.

(John v: 1-15.)

I. The Analysis.

1. This lesson does not fall into divisions, but is one scene, one act. For the spiritual significance of the incident of the lesson see "Heart," &c.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

There is much in this beautiful lesson that presses for the first place in relative importance. Dispensationally, we have, as in the scene by Jacob's Well, law and grace brought into contrast. Perhaps this scene by Bethesda marks even a stronger contrast. Bethesda would have been effectual if only the infirm man could have met the conditions. Alas, the very infirmity which brought him to the pool, kept him from getting down into it.

When the lawyer in Luke x asked what he must *do* to inherit eternal life, Jesus told him to do the Law and he should live; but the Law says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind," and neither that lawyer nor any other human being save Jesus ever did that for one fraction of a second. The trouble is not with the Law, which is "holy, just and good," but with man who is unholy, unjust and evil. The Law "made nothing perfect" (Heb. vii: 19), because it was "weak through the flesh."

And in many minds law and grace are confused hopelessly just at the point which troubled the infirm man by the pool

of Bethesda: "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool." Galantianized Protestantism teaches that Christ comes to be that missing "man"—that He helps us into the pool. But here He does nothing of the kind. By His own power, He makes the man whole and then sends him away from the pool. Later, meeting him in the temple, He tells him to cease living a sinful life. But this is not the heart of this lesson.

Again, a most striking illustration is here given of the hardening and blinding effects of putting the sense of sacredness at the wrong place. With the Jews, as with the Puritans, the Sabbath was the supremely sacred thing; with Jesus Christ, humanity was the supremely sacred thing. All sense of joy in the restoration of the infirm man was swamped by the fear that the Sabbath had been desecrated. It never occurred to them that, in Jesus' phrase, "The Sabbath was made for man"; that man, not institutions, holds the first place in the thought of God. I have known a great evangelist refuse to speak to a crowded meeting, because to reach it he must use a public conveyance on the Lord's Day.

But it seems to me that the deepest thing in this wonderful lesson is in those words of the healed man: "And he that was healed wist not who it was." The unrecognized Christ is in the heart of this lesson. It was the pathetic fact in the earth life of Christ that men were so ready to accept his blessings, so slow to recognize him. It has been the pathetic fact in the history of Christendom. Every distinctive blessing of Christian civilization as distinguished from pagan civilizations, has come directly from Christ, and yet the enormous majority of civilized men to-day do not see that the very things which make life endurable to them are His gifts.

Vastly more pathetic is the fact that to so many of His

own who are in the world, He is an unrecognized Christ. Like the Emmaus disciples, we walk with holden eyes, and though He is by our side, we do not know that it is He. Like those disciples, we are puzzled or made sad by His providences, and speak of disappointments of our faith more than of faith's victories.

THE MIRACLE OF THE LOAVES AND FISHES.

(John vi: 1-14.)

I. The Analysis.

1. Jesus leaving Galilee, verse 1.
2. The gathering multitudes, verses 2-5.
3. The incomparable Teacher, verse 3 (see parallel accounts in Matt., Mark, Luke).
4. The hungering multitudes, verse 5.
5. The impotent disciples, verses 5-9. See "Heart."
6. Feeding the multitude, verses 10, 11.
7. Gathering the fragments, verses 12-14.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

Christ commands the impossible; with Christ the impossible becomes possible—that is manifestly the core truth here. It is a parable in action, this feeding of the five thousand; a parable of interpretation, for it explains the whole mystery of the co-working of God and man; a parable of this dispensation, for it illustrates the method of the dispensation.

Christ commands the impossible. Five barley loaves and two small fishes *were* too few for so many. When our Lord said: "Give ye them to eat" (Matt. xiv: 16), He told them to do what they were wholly unable to do. The enterprises of Christ are all humanly impossible. When he ordered

twelve unlettered, untravelled fishermen and Galilean villagers to assault Judaism in its central stronghold, Jerusalem, and then to attack the heathen world system, a system organized by the immense skill and experience of Satan, and intrenched in the high places of the earth, He flung a handful of spring water against Niagara. And His ethic is just as impossible. When He tells us that we are perfectly identified with Himself, and that therefore we are to "Walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing," He commands what men cannot do. The yoke of the law, which neither the Apostles nor their fathers were able to bear, was child's play compared to it.

When His Word requires that our hearts shall hold an unceasing song of gratitude, and be filled with humility (Eph. v: 19-21), He requires the impossible.

But with Him, all this becomes so possible as to seem axiomatic. Five barley loaves and two small fishes *plus* the creative power of Almighty God, are enough, not for five thousand daily, but the whole world. Twelve unlearned men *plus* the Holy Ghost, are enough to deliver souls out of the power of the very Sanhedrin itself, and, in three centuries, to drive heathenism from the throne of the world. A saved sinner, weak as water in himself, and the sport of the demons, may, in the power of the same Spirit, beat back Satan, and (an even greater victory) dethrone self and enthrone Christ over the kingdom within.

And note: Doubtless Christ could have set aside the human instrumentality entirely. His own hands were sufficient for the task that day, and all the days, and all the tasks ever since. Not only so, He could have used the angels. It was not imperative that He should have us, but it was His plan. He made it part of the eternal counsels that as the salvation of mankind was entrusted to a Man, so

the tidings of that salvation should be carried to man by man. But from the first messengers to the last, it is part of the plan that the power shall be of God. The sense of this is almost the lost sense of the churches of Christ. Organization, money, high training—these, which are but the loaves and fishes of the great enterprise, have been made the ground of confidence. Like the prophet's servant on Dothan, we need to have our eyes opened to see that the mountain round about us is full of the horses and chariots of the fire of the Lord.

AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

(John vii: 37-46.)

I. The Analysis.

(1) The cry of Christ. (See "Heart".)

(2) A theological controversy (verses 40-42).

(3) The usual result of theological controversy (verses 43-44).

(4) A great truth (verse 46).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The cry of the Lord is, of course, the open heart of this lesson. "If any man thirst." All of the invitations of Scripture are addressed to states of soul. "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." There is a cry in this lesson which should find many a heart in this day.

Note the *time* of the cry: "In the last day, that great day of the feast." Do you see? Jesus waited till all the ceremonial was over; till all the sacrifices had been offered; till all the elaborate ritual had been performed; till all the

processionals, and recessionals, and antiphonies had been sung and chanted—then He stood forth and lifted up His cry, "if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." He said, in effect: "If among you there is one whose soul cannot be satisfied with ceremonials, and pretty religiosities; with that which at its freshest and best is but the shell and outer garmenture of faith, and at its worst is faith's shroud and coffin; if there are any among you who want realities and not shows and shadows, "let him come unto me and drink." "Out of *his* inmost being shall flow rivers of living water."

Our Lord was speaking of the Spirit "whom they that believe on Him should receive." In due time the Spirit came, and now every believer has the Spirit, for the Spirit is given upon the alone condition of faith, but who would say that all believers give evidence of the outflowing rivers of spiritual power and blessing? The difficulty is that, *having* the Spirit, believers are not *filled* with the Spirit (Eph. v. 18). And they are not filled with the Spirit because, satisfied with the externalities of religion, with church membership, church going, and formal and mechanical service, they do not meet the Saviour's condition—they do not "thirst."

There are three conditions which we must meet if we are to know the "rivers." The first is "thirst." It is to be divinely discontented with any life but the highest and best. It is to turn away from forms to realities. The second condition is, "come." Not a sinner's coming for salvation, but a saint's coming for power and blessing. It is just going back to Jesus to fall at His blessed feet in confession of powerlessness, uselessness. And the third condition is, "drink." Very many meet the first and second conditions

who draw back in unbelief at the third. To "drink" is to receive by faith.

The snare of "feeling" is doubtless the great hindrance to faith in this vital matter. Athirst for the deeper, more vital things of the life in Christ, we come to Him for "help." There is no definiteness in our quest. We go away comforted, but we do not definitely receive the filling with the Spirit by that same simple act of faith through which we received Christ. Or, better instructed, we go to Him definitely for the filling, and then wait for feeling. Filling and feeling are not the same words, do not mean the same thing. We have heard or read some thrilling experience which was accompanied with great emotion, and we seek the emotion instead of the Spirit. Not feeling it, we conclude that we have somehow missed the way. Take the filling by naked faith, thank God that you are filled, and expect the power to be manifested, as you touch other lives.

THE SLAVERY OF SIN.

(John viii: 31-40.)

I. The Analysis.

(1) The test of discipleship is continuous. All who truly are disciples do continue.

(2) Truth or tradition; truth or privilege, which? (verses 32-40).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

That sin enslaves is a truth level to all human experience. The most obvious instance is that of the drink habit. Neither argument nor illustration is needed to convince us that drink enslaves its victims. But the men to whom

Christ was talking in our lesson for to-day were not drinking men. They lived lives of the extremest puritanic strictness. Moreover, they were religionists whose whole lives were absorbed in religious observances. And not only so, their religion was not heathenism, but a religion revealed by the true God, and every form of it was observed by them with scrupulous exactness. They had the profoundest reverence for the name of God, and were assiduous in attendance on synagogue and temple. Why should Jesus tell such men that they were the bond slaves of sin They did not steal, nor blaspheme, nor drink. They did not play worldly games, nor attend the theatres when in Rome.

Their sins were bigotry, self-righteousness and unbelief. And to those sins they were in a slavery so absolute that they did not even know it. Nay, they were most self-righteous and self-complacent at those very points. There is no heart so hard as the heart of a religious formalist. No other sort of man is so hopelessly cruel, so relentlessly unforgiving. No other man is so merciless toward the weak and erring. The two offences of Jesus which condemned Him in the estimation of these good people were His constant violation of their conventional ideas of strict Sabbath observance, and His close touch upon the lives of "sinners."

They were bound hand and foot in mere traditionalism and formalism; and, with a real zeal of God, they hounded Jesus to the cross. The lesson is that the slavery of sin is not confined to the outbreaking and openly shameful sins; that spiritual deadness and the monstrous sin of self-righteousness also enslave.

That is one-half of the heart of this lesson. The other half is that whether the bondage be that of drink or of pharisaic correctness, the one delivering power is the truth. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you

free." And all real knowledge of the truth begins with knowing Him who is the Truth. Truth is not an impersonal ethic, primarily. Truth, primarily, is just Jesus Christ; the ethic is incidental. Then, in a secondary but equally important sense, the whole body of revelation which gathers about and interprets Christ and His work is "the Truth."

Have we wondered sometimes at the tremendous emphasis which Scripture puts upon the divine sacredness of that body of revelation? Has it seemed to us harsh when Paul solemnly denounces the anathema of God on the preacher of "any other gospel than that which you have received"? Does it seem unduly harsh when a Spirit filled apostle delivered to Satan that he might learn not to blaspheme one worse error was the seemingly venial one of maintaining that the resurrection had passed already? (1 Tim. i:20; 2 Tim. ii:17-18). It was because the only means which can avail for the saving and disenthrallment of men is the Truth.

The incarnate Truth, Christ, saves the slaves of sin by His power, from the bondage of sin, as He saves them from the guilt of sin by His blood; and the revealed Truth saves men from mental and spiritual bondage by the new light which it brings.

HEALING OF THE MAN BORN BLIND.

(John ix: 1-11.)

I. The Analysis.

(1) The natural condition of all men (verse 1).
(2) The right and the wrong explanation (verses 4-6).
(3) The Light giving light (verses 5-7).
(4) A faithful witness (verses 8-11).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

This lesson presents our Lord in perhaps the greatest of His characters, that of the light of the world. To all outward seeming nothing could have been more audacious. What the unbelieving world saw as it looked upon Jesus was a young Jewish artisan, from a remote and ill-reputed village of Galilee. He spoke of the world, but He had never travelled. Not once had He been beyond the confines of the little land given to His ancestor, Abraham. The civilizations of Greece and Rome were known to Him only by rumor. The great literatures of the world and its science and art were unknown to Him. He had neither wealth nor great position. His followers were a few ignorant fishermen, tax gatherers and converted harlots. He had not written a book, and He was about to go out of life as an executed criminal. All this was what the world saw, and all that it saw.

Nineteen hundred years have passed since Jesus announced Himself as the Light of the World. What does that world see now? It sees the absolute verification of that claim. Wherever Jesus is known there is light; and the measure of the light in any part of the world to-day is the precise measure of the degree in which Jesus is known.

To any civilized man life is intolerable just where Jesus is not known. He has proved Himself to be not only the sole spiritual light which this world has, or has ever had, but He is the light of intellect and of the affectional life as well. Everywhere the ethic of Jesus has formed the human conscience. Millions are living in conscious violation of that ethic, but they are all living with a bad conscience because of it. The intellectual light which Jesus has shed abroad in the world has been awfully perverted, and for this the Gentile nations will be called to an awful account when He comes back again, but the light came from Him.

He has given the only light on the mysteries of life and of death which has been found adequate. He has interpreted both life and death. Life here is immensely important because it is the vestibule to the life beyond; and death is a conquered enemy, who can at the worst but open the gates of glory to a passing saint. He has given light on the philosophy of life, on the true life-method. Life is to be invested, not hoarded, and the investment is to be made in other lives, not in stocks and bonds. Religion is not saying prayers, but visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keeping himself unspotted from the world. When ecclesiasticism, and creed and custom, and form give place to conversion, the unity of the Spirit, and the invested life, there will come such a revival as this world never saw.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

(John x: 7-18.)

I. The Analysis.

(1) The Shepherd as the door of the sheep, verses 7-9.
(2) The Life-giver, verse 10.
(3) The Good Shepherd and the hireling, verses 11-14.
(4) The Good Shepherd and the Father, verses 15-18.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The shepherd office of our Lord is differentiated in three ways: He is called the "good," the "great," and the "chief" Shepherd. As the good Shepherd he gives his life for the sheep. As the great Shepherd he comes again from the dead to care for the sheep. As the chief Shepherd he is coming again to gather the sheep into the eternal pastures (John x: 11; Heb. xiii: 20; 1 Peter v: 4; John xiv: 1-4; 1 Thess. iv: 15-18). In the present lesson we have before us the first of these shepherd characters. He does not here speak either of raising from the dead to care for the sheep, nor of coming again to gather the sheep.

As the good Shepherd he is, first, the door of the sheep. Four things are true of those who enter in by the door of Christ Jesus. (1) Salvation. "He shall be saved." The sheepfold of the good Shepherd is a place of perfect security. The Shepherd becomes responsible for the safety of every sheep who simply "enters in" (John x: 28). (2) "He . . . shall go in." This speaks of communion, the privilege of access in prayer and fellowship.

It is of the greatest importance to our peace to get this settled once for all, that our right of access to the Father does not depend on our sanctification, but only on our justifica-

tion. We "enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by that new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the vail" (Heb. x: 19-20). We are made nigh by the blood (Eph. ii: 13), not by goodness. (3) "And out," that is for testimony and service. The second and third blessings of those who enter by the door Christ Jesus are closely related; for, if we "go out" more than we "go in," our testimony will be feeble and formal. And (4) "He . . . shall find pasture." The door is a door of abundance, not of want. They who begin by entering in, and go on in communion and service, will assuredly eat of the fat of the land, of the very finest of the wheat.

Then, the second characteristic of the good Shepherd is that he "gives his life for the sheep." The contrast suggested here is with the law. Under law the sheep must die for the shepherd (Gen. iv: 4; Exodus xxix: 15-16; Levit. v: 5-6). Under grace the Shepherd dies for the sheep (John i: 29).

The third characteristic of the good Shepherd is that he knows his sheep, and his sheep know him. "He calleth his own sheep by name." One of the sweet discoveries of the heavenly fold will be the new names that our Shepherd has given each of us as we entered by the door into the sheepfold (Rev. ii: 17). Some of the early saints seem to have been given their new name at once. "Thou art Simon, thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a rock." Afterward the Shepherd called him "Petros," calling himself at the same time "this Petra." Petra means a rock; Petros, a piece of a rock, a little stone. It was an affectionate play upon the two names, and how tender and intimate it all is!

Probably the word tenderness most fully expresses the varied nature of the shepherd offices of our Lord. There

is nothing in all the Bible that more speaks to our hearts than the Twenty-third Psalm, or this Tenth of John. But we must remember that the tenderness of Jesus Christ is never sentimental. It is always the tenderness of perfect strength, and perfect righteousness. The Shepherd has a rod as well as a staff.

A story is told of one who talked with a shepherd in the higher Alps. While talking the shepherd gathered a handful of the best grass and went to a low shelter near by. "I have a sheep there with a broken leg," he said. "How did that happen?" queried the traveller. "It did not happen," answered the shepherd; "I broke it intentionally. That sheep was headstrong, and unruly. It did not love me, and was always leading the other sheep astray. Now it knows its dependence on me, and loves to eat from my hand. When it is well again it will keep nearer to me than any of the sheep."

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS.

(John xi: 32-45.)

I. The Analysis.

(1) The meeting of Jesus with Martha, verses 20-27.
(2) The meeting of Jesus and Mary, verses 28-34.
(3) The resurrection of Lazarus, verses 35-45.
(4) The blessed result, verse 45.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The deeper meanings of this lesson are indicated by our Lord himself.

First. "To the intent ye may believe" (verse 15). The miracle of Lazarus' resurrection, then, was, first of all

a testimony to believers to his own. A testimony intended to produce faith, not in the doctrine of a resurrection "at the last day"; that, in common with all spiritual Jews, they already believed. With Job they believed that, "After I shall awake, though this body be destroyed, yet out of my flesh shall I see God" (Job xix: 25). Martha expressed that common faith when she said, "I know that he shall rise again at the last day." It was the old promise to Daniel, "Thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

But the addition to the faith of his disciples which the resurrection of Lazarus was to effect was faith in Jesus as having in *himself* resurrection power. Martha, indeed, went beyond mere belief in a resurrection: "I know that *even now,* whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." She believed in a resurrection, and in Christ as an Intercessor of such prevalency that through his prayers God would even raise the dead. But Jesus is, himself, the resurrection. The ancient Syrian church called him "the Vivifier"; the ancient Abyssinian church, "the Resurrectioner."

The resurrection of Lazarus, then, is not only a new demonstration of the Deity of Christ, but also the presentation of Christ to our faith in a new character, "the resurrection and the life." Obviously, since death is the result of sin (Rom. v: 12), a perfect Redeemer must be able to annul death.

Second. "That the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (verse 4). This is not something different from the first meaning, but the same meaning applied to Christ instead of to the faith of the disciples. For Christ is glorified when something of his divinity is revealed. On the mount of transfiguration, for example, he "appeared in glory"—

that is, His essential Deity shone forth through the veil of flesh which usually hid it. In the first miracle at Cana he "manifested forth His glory" in the act of creative power—a power belonging to Deity alone. So here again the resurrection of Lazarus was a work of divine power, and so a manifestation of His glory.

Then, third, the resurrection of Lazarus was to the end that the bystanders (not his disciples) might believe (verse 42). And this actually occurred, as we learn from verse 45: "Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which he did, believed on him."

If, now, we sum up the matter, we shall find the heart of the lesson in the disclosure which it makes of the divine motive in miracle. Every miracle, especially the perpetual miracle of the new birth, which is life to a dead soul, as the resurrection of Lazarus was life to a dead body, is for the strengthening of our faith in him as the Lord of life; not in a general sense, but in a particular sense as the one who is able to give the new life to the one whom we love, and for whom we pray; is a showing forth of his divine glory, and a testimony upon which faith in those who see the great work may rest.

For, after all, there is no more convincing testimony to the divine power of Christ than that of a life redeemed to purity, piety and usefulness. "Beholding the man that was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it" (Acts iv: 14).

THE SUPPER AT BETHANY.

(John xii: 1-11.)

I. The Analysis.

(1) The Supper, verses 1-2.
(2) The act of Mary, verses 3-4.
(3) The insincere objection, verses 5-6.
(4) Jesus' vindication of Mary, verses 7-8.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The central figure in this scene is, incontestably, Mary of Bethany. Our Lord himself makes her so. To her He gives the highest praise ever bestowed by God on a mere human being, "She hath done what she could." Mary of Bethany is the highest type of discipleship in the New Testament, and in this lesson she is seen at her highest reach, so that the character of this simple village girl becomes the heart of the lesson.

She comes into the narratives of the earth life of Christ three times, and these have a sequence which must be followed if we are to understand, not Mary alone, but the conditions of the highest discipleship. In the first two scenes she is brought into contrast with her sister Martha; in the last her spiritual intelligence and her utter devotedness appear against the foil of the stupidity of all the other disciples, and especially of the traitor, Judas.

We meet Mary first sitting at Jesus' feet and hearing His word. It was the place of a learner, of one who would, first of all comprehend her Master. Martha, on the other hand, begins, not by knowing Him, but by a noisy burdened service for Him. She has had her followers in every age. Every church knows them: the bustling, fussy, troubled

getters up of fairs, and suppers for the indirect raising of the money which the Bible tells us to quietly give. She, like her modern sisters, has little patience with them who quietly sit at Jesus' feet and she must meet her Lord's gentle rebuke, his vindication of Mary: "She hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

We next meet Mary on the occasion of the resurrection of Lazarus. Again she is in contrast with Martha. Mary abides quietly in the house till the Master calls for her; Martha meets and rebukes him, even while confessing a faith shortly to contradict itself at the grave-side. It is easy to repeat a formula, to say, "Yea, Lord," when asked, "Believest thou this?" concerning a great truth; quite another matter to use that faith in the moment of testing. "He hath been dead four days" was the actual measure of Martha's faith. In all this scene little is said of Mary till we come to that statement which we may so easily pass over: "Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him."

Mary's friends, not Martha's were converted. They saw something in Mary's bearing under trial which convinced them that she had a resource in sorrow all unknown to them. Oh, the power of the quiet faith that has ripened in meditation at Jesus' feet and in the hearing of his word! In the first scene we might well think of Mary as gentle and winsome, but unpractical. Now we see that her Master made no mistake when he said, "Mary hath chosen that good part." And, in the light of that saying how idle to speak of the different temperaments of these two sisters. Jesus said the difference was one of choice, not temperament.

And now, in our present lesson, we have Mary in the highest privilege of discipleship, "the fellowship of His suf-

ferings." Only Mary, of all His disciples, had really understood the Master when He said that He must be crucified and rise again the third day. They were dismayed by the crucifixion, and incredulous of the resurrection. But Mary came to anoint his body *beforehand* to the burying. Well she knew that if she were ever to perform that office of love toward her Lord it *must* be before the burying. She of Bethany is not among the women who went, in all tenderness of love, indeed, but ignorantly, to anoint Christ who had already risen from the dead.

And who shall say what solace, what comfort it gave His loving heart to perceive that one at least of those for whom He was about to die was entering with Him by anticipation into Gethsemane and Calvary?

THE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

(John xii: 12-26.)

I. The Analysis.

(1) The triumphal entry, verses 12-16.
(2) The confused opinions of the people, verses 17-19.
(3) The desire of the Greeks, verses 20-22.
(4) The answer of Christ, verses 23-26.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

There is a beautiful order in the incidents which form our lessons, for the present and following weeks, to which a brother called the attention of the church many years ago. Beginning with the twelfth chapter, the events fall into the order of the tabernacle, or temple service. That order, it will be remembered, was, first, the brazen altar whereon the burnt offering was offered; then the

layer of cleansing; then the holy place, the scene of fellowship and worship; and, last of all the most holy place, into which the high priest entered.

Following that order we have in the twelfth chapter the death of the Lord in three aspects, as the corn of wheat, the judgment of the world, and irresistible attraction. In the thirteenth chapter, the laver of cleansing; in the fourteenth and sixteenth chapters the High Priest and his associate priests in the Holy Place, in intimate communion, and in the seventeenth chapter the High Priest passes as it were behind the veil into the Holy of Holies, and the listening priests hear his voice in intercession according to Hebrews vii: 25.

Every Christian, certainly every Sunday school teacher, ought to study with care the typology of the Tabernacle. It gives the mould, or form, of the divine plan of redemption, and in many ways recurs through the whole Scripture.

Turning now to the lesson, we are, I think, to find its deeper truth in the answer of Christ to Philip and Andrew when certain Greeks wished to see him: "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit."

What did our Lord mean? How do his words constitute a reason for not seeing the Greeks? These Greeks were Gentile proselytes to Judaism. Why should he not see them?

Briefly, because a King offering himself to his own proper subjects, the Jews, was no object of faith to a Gentile. Rejected by Israel, He was about to be crucified for the sins of the world, Jew and Gentile, and then, as the

Crucified, He would become the right Object of faith to both Jew and Gentile. An uncrucified Messiah could save no Gentile, no Jew. This is His own word: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone."

And this word of Christ's is the sufficient answer to all the theories of the atonement which ignore the liberation of the life of Christ that it might be imparted to all who believe. "In Him was life," and on the cross that life was set free to enter those who, through faith in Him are born again, just as a corn of wheat, planted, dies into countless corns of wheat. Only through death could Christ become the life-giver.

We have not before us in John xii the sin-offering aspect of our Lord's death, but rather the whole burnt offering aspect, that sense in which His death was all for the Father.

The heart of this lesson, then, is that Christ would not show himself to the Greeks because salvation is not by the influence of His spotless life, as some say, but by faith in Him as crucified for us that we might not perish, but have eternal life. He had offered himself as a king to Israel, but during the time of his earth-ministry His disciples were carefully instructed not to go in any way of the Gentiles, but only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. After the crucifixion, however, the word was to go to the uttermost parts of the earth, but the message was no longer to be, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," but "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

An uncrucified Christ was not, could not be, an object of faith to the Gentiles.

WASHING THE DISCIPLES' FEET.

(John xiii: 1-14.)

I. The Analysis.

(1) The unfailing love of Jesus, verse 1.
(2) The symbolical service of Jesus, verses 2-5.
(3) The objection of Simon, verse 6.
(4) The explanation of the feet-washing, verses 7-14.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

Cleansing, in order to service and communion, is evidently the central truth of this lesson. Our Lord makes this clear in his answer to Peter's protestation, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Our Lord answered him, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." The reference is not to salvation, as the Lord makes clear in verse 10; "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet."

As this distinction is a vital one, we linger a moment upon it. It is in a word, the distinction between justification and sanctification. Justification is cleansing from the guilt of sin; sanctification is a progressive cleansing from the habit of sin. Both these aspects meet in such passages as Psa. li: 7, and Eph. v: 25-27. David says: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Hyssop was the little shrub with which sacrificial blood was applied, and speaks, therefore, of the guilt of sin. Purged with blood David was "clean" before God; but, as with us after conversion, he discovered sins of habit from which he needed to be "washed" if he were to be indeed "whiter than snow." So, in the Ephesian passage, Christ "loved the church, and gave Himself for it," which was redemption by blood, justification; "that

he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word," which is progressive sanctification, and answers to the feet washing of John xiii.

The thought is of the "walk" of the believer, not of the salvation of a sinner; and the imagery is drawn, not only from the place of the laver in the temple order, which was between the place of sacrifice and the place of worship, service and communion, but also from the daily life of the Orient. In the public bath the body is washed clean, but the feet, in passing from the bath to the home, contract defilement by the way. This must be removed as a prelude to the happy fellowship of the home.

Christ, who was about to bring the disciples into the intimacy of the first Lord's supper, must have them clean first.

The lessons are obvious. As the priest could not pass from the altar on which offerings were burnt to the holy place where he offered incense, type of prayer and worship, without stopping at the laver for cleansing, so Christ would teach us that, saved though we surely are if we have believed on Him crucified, yet we cannot have His intimacy, cannot serve Him, cannot acceptably pray to Him, or worship the Father unless we, too, have been to the laver.

In 1 John 1:9 we find the New Testament laver: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Note the words "faithful and just." Why not kind and merciful? Because the forgiveness of the daily sins of the believer does not proceed from the general benevolence of God, but from His recognition of the work of Christ on the cross. He is just to the cross of Christ, and faithful to His covenant.

But let us not leave this all important subject without noticing our Lord's words, "Except *I* wash thee, thou hast

no part with Me." Confession does not cleanse us from the defilements of our walk. The great passage only says that if we confess *He* is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse. Let us not be proud of our confessions of sin, for confession is, after all, but putting the defiled feet into the pierced hands of Jesus for cleansing.

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES.

(John xv: 1-12.)

I. The Analysis.

1. Christ the "true" Vine. The word "true," in John's writings, means "real." The contrast is not between truth and falsehood, but between type and fulfilment. Israel was a vine (Isa. v) but a wild-grape vine. Christ is the real vine. Verse 1.

2. The fruitless branch. Verse 2. This is a believer, a true branch in the Vine, but one which in the soil of earth, does not bear fruit; so the Husbandman transplants it. "Taketh away" is, literally, "taketh up out of."

3. The cleansing Word. Verse 3. The application of the Word, by the Spirit, to the believer's ways. Eph. v: 26.

4. The condition of fruitfulness. Verses 4, 5, 7. "Abide." The sphere of the believer's life is, "in the heavenly, in Christ." Eph. i: 3; ii: 6. To abide is just to live. "The heavenly" is not a *place*—the word should be stricken out of Ephesians: it is a state of being. Heaven, on the contrary, is a place. We are in the heavenly now; we shall presently be taken to heaven, and then we shall still be in the heavenly. So long as we are living a heavenly life down here we are "abiding" in Christ.

5. The mere professor. Verse 6. Here our Lord does

not say: "Every branch in me"; but, "If *a man* abide not." Even "men" despise a fruitless, non-abiding professor.

6. The three degrees of fruit-bearing. Verses 1, 5, 8. "Fruit," "more fruit," "much fruit." Not until much fruit is reached do we glorify God.

7. The "Father's commandments" and the Son's "commandment." Verses 9-12. This is a distinction of vital importance. Christ came to fulfil the law, and kept His Father's commandments. To us He gives the new commandment of love, and He writes that on our hearts. Heb. viii: 10. We *do* love one another.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The emphatic word in this lesson is "fruit," and the lesson itself is an unfolding of the conditions which must exist if fruit is to be borne. A preliminary word as to the meaning of the word. In Galatians (v: 22, 23) fruit is defined to be "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance"; in other places fruit is good works; in still others, converts. I think the word in our lesson is generic, and includes the graces which make the Christian character, good works, and the winning of souls. In other words, our Lord here lays down the conditions which result in fruitful Christian lives. It is well to note, before leaving the word, that three degrees of fruit-bearing are mentioned; "fruit," "more fruit," "much fruit," and not until we bear much fruit is our Father glorified. The reason is that up to a certain point the graces of the Christian character may be, and are, imitated by persons who are naturally gentle and amiable, kindly and cultured. The ideals of Christ are universally known and approved, and, in so-called Christian lands, the behavior of respectable people is based upon them. But the winsomeness of the gentle and amiable worldling

never goes so far as the winning of souls, and the Christian's "love, joy, and peace" cannot be counterfeited.

What, then, are the conditions of fruit-bearing? They are two, and two only. That is part of "the simplicity which is in Christ."

And first, there must be such a vital union to Christ as is implied in the figure chosen by Him to express that union—a vine and its branches. I have called it a "vital," that is living union. Let us try really to grasp that fact—the fact that the believer is as really a part of Christ as the branch of a vine is a part of the vine. Do not think of our Lord's words as a mere figure of speech. He uses, indeed, a figure drawn from nature, but He uses it because it exactly expresses His meaning; the believer is an actual part of Christ.

This is the truth taught even more vitally in the revelation concerning the Body of Christ. "For, by one Spirit have we all been baptised into one body, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. xii: 12). "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

For every believer, then, the primary condition exists. We *are* the branches of Him who is the Vine. We have not to make it so; it is so.

The second condition, therefore, is the one upon which our Lord puts the emphasis. He does not say: Become members of my body—branches in me—but, "I *am* the vine, ye *are* the branches." It is upon the maintaining by us of a continuous *experience* according to that fact that Christ insists. That is the force of the word abide. To "Abide" means to live. The fruit-bearing branch; the branch that does not bear fruit, and the "man" who takes the place by profession of a branch, but who not abiding proves that he is not a branch, must be discriminated. The first is "purged"

(cleansed, pruned) that he may bear more fruit; the second, a true branch but fruitless is taken away." The Greek here is very sweet. It is, literally, "taken up out of"; and is the Husbandman's gentle way with a true vine so circumstanced as not to bear fruit. The third is, "Cast out as a branch"; disowned.

What is it, then, to abide in Christ? It is best expressed in Paul's great testimony already quoted: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Practically, it is the continual attitude in all the scenes and experiences of life of, "yet not I, but Christ." It is to oppose to every temptation, "not I but Christ"; to summon to every opportunity "not I but Christ"; to win men by the manifestation of "not I but Christ"; to depend in every emergency on "not I but Christ."

HIS PRAYER.

(John xvii: 15-26.)

I. The Analysis.

See Our Hope for May, 1904, page 654, where the Editor has given a most spiritual analysis of the great intercessory prayer of Christ.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

There is a close moral connection between this lesson and the parable of the vine and the branches. In both the underlying truth is the oneness of the believer and Christ. In that parable the truth of the oneness was considered

in its relation to the believer's fruitfulness; in this lesson the emphasis is more on his perfect security, and his joy. It is important, therefore, that we see how the unity of Christ and the believer is the very groundwork of all that He asks in our behalf in this great prayer. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." Because of that He has given them everything He has, and asks for them everything God has. The Father gave Him to have life in himself and to give away, so He gave life to the disciples. God was His Father, so He made the disciples children, too. The Father gave Him certain words, so He gave those words to the disciples. Now He asks that the disciples may be with Him where He is, and that they may share all there is in heaven for Him. And all this based on the great fact of identity. "All mine are thine, and thine are mine." "I in them, and thou in me."

This is the immense truth which marks off the saved of this dispensation from the saved of past ages, and of the ages to come. The Old Testament saint was a "friend of God," like Abraham, or a "friend of the Bridegroom," like John the Baptist. The Tribulation saints will be "before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple." The millennial saints will be subjects of the King. But the Christian is, by the new birth, identified with the Father by nature (2 Peter 1:4); with the Son by oneness of life (1 John v:12; Col. iii:4; John xiv:19); and with the Holy Spirit by His indwelling (1 Cor. vi:19; 1 Cor. vi:17). It is the truth which the Reformation did not discern, and to a consciousness of which the church is coming but slowly.

But, after all, important as it is, and central as it is to the possibility of such a prayer, the identity is not the heart of this lesson.

What that heart is our Lord makes clear: "And these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." Or, as Weymouth renders: "that they may have my gladness within them, filling their hearts." That is, the things which the Lord was saying were the things which filled Him with gladness; and He spoke them in our hearing that we, knowing them, might be filled with the same gladness.

Those "things" are, (1) an accomplished redemption. "I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." Our Lord in this prayer puts Himself this side the cross. All that was necessary for our perfect salvation He accomplished on Calvary. (2) A perfect manifestation. He not only revealed the Fatherhood of God as the true relation in which God stands toward every believer in Christ crucified, but He perfectly revealed the Father. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." (3) He rejoiced in being the representative of the believer with God. The seventeenth of John is but an example of the ceaseless intercessory work of Christ in the believer's behalf. He had represented the Father in heaven to the sons on earth, now He was representing the sons on earth before the Father in heaven. (4) He rejoiced in the way He was providing for the perfect security of the believer amid all the trials and temptations of life. He was depositing them for safe-keeping with the Father. Our security rests on the Father's fidelity to a trust reposed in Him by His Son. (5) He rejoiced in the sure sanctification of the believers. The word here means a gradual separation from all that is not of God—a setting apart. He so set Himself apart, that we might also, through the truth be set apart. (6) He rejoiced in that all believers were to be glorified.

BEFORE PILATE.

(John xviii: 28-40.)

I. The Analysis.

The present lesson does not fall into analytical form. The teaching points are to be drawn from the mutual questions and answers of Christ and of Pilate. The great *lessons* are: (1) the nature of Christ's kingdom in this world, but not of it; (2) the true royalty identification with the truth; (3) a lesson on substitution, Christ and Barabbas.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The full significance of the lesson topic is only to be comprehended by one who studies the parallel accounts of the appearances of Christ before the Roman governor. With the whole scene and all the events thus before us we may ask what is the deepest heart of it all.

Why was a man with all the power of Rome back of him, a man who had not hesitated to send soldiers into the very temple to mingle the blood of the worshippers with their sacrifices, of a sudden grown afraid of the sanhedrin? Why should a man with absolute power, as he himself boasted, over life and death, send a man whom he confessed to be innocent to a cruel death?

Our interest in a right answer to these questions is not a mere historical interest. Pilate was a typical man. As he reasoned so men, consciously or unconsciously, reason to-day. The underlying motives which perverted his actions pervert the actions of man now. Jesus Christ is always on trial. Physical death, indeed, He suffered but once; but millions are every day crucifying the Son of God afresh and putting Him to an open shame.

Some one has said that in the deep inner sense it was Pilate who was on trial that fateful day. In truth both Pilate and Jesus Christ were on trial; Jesus for the moment; Pilate for all time and all eternity. The Roman governor had his assize that day. The future judgment will be but declarative of the issues determined when he rejected Jesus, and released Barabbas. Of whom, then, is Pilate a type?

First of all of the man who has either sadly or cynically given up the search for truth.

When Jesus said: "For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth"; Pilate's contemptuous rejoinder was, "What is truth?"

The heathen weariness was upon him. Pagan learning and philosophy were both bankrupt. Practical men, men of affairs, had ceased to concern themselves with the barren controversies of Stoic and Epicurean. Nothing came of it. Millions of modern men, more or less articulately, stand just there now in respect of religious truth—nay, in respect of the insistent personal claims of Christ. "We do not know," they say. "Some of you who profess His name say that He is but the best of men others of you do not say that quite so bluntly, but you reduce Him with your kenotic theories, and what not, within limits which after all are practically those of mere humanity. Our mothers worshipped Him—they were good and happy—we are neither good nor happy."

And, next, Pilate stands for the man of expediency. "What is popular?" not "What is right; what is true?"

The most contemptible possible attitude of the human soul is the attitude of the opportunist. Day by day the man who allows in himself that posture of his inner man is contracting the mean deformity of soul-stoop. The Duchess in the play, seeing her husband fawning upon the Borgia,

asks, "And did I indeed marry a man with so pliant a back?" Doubtless there is a sense of what is prudent which is not ignoble. There is a noble fear—the fear of the Lord. It is one of the Gospel motives. But that other thing; that mean and politic attitude which considers the interest of the moment—that man must not think to obtain anything from the Lord. But the Lord demands all, and unquestioningly.

And, again, Pilate stands for the man in whom the spiritual faculty is all but extinguished by the habit of unbelief.

Before him stood the Truth, and he had lied to his soul so long that he could not discern Him. Two things quench the flame of the spirit of man, that sense of the divine which makes the Psalmist call the human spirit, "The candle of the Lord"; the giving over of all the powers to the things of the world and the habit of skepticism. "Art thou a king?" said Pilate. "Thou sayest"; which is idiomatic for an affirmation with a reserve. "I am a king; but not in your crass sense. You think of a kingdom of force; my kingdom is the reign of faith and love. But the very suggestion that there could be some nobler, sweeter kingdom than that resting upon blood and oppression, did not even stir a question in Pilate's dead soul.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

(John xix: 17-30.)

I. The Analysis.

1. The crucifixion. Verse 18. Simply does the pen of inspiration record the most stupendous event in all history, whether of heaven or of earth. Truly this is not the manner of man. An uninspired pen writing of the crucifixion would have added a multitude of details.

2. The title written by Pilate. Verses 19-22. Pilate little thought of the deeper meaning of his words in verse 22. He had written an awful record against himself that day.

3. The fulfilled prophecy. Verses 23, 24. This was the day of the fulfilment of the 22d Psalm. The student should read that Psalm very carefully.

4. The order now should follow the cries from the cross. The first three were uttered in the light, before the darkness and the forsaking; the last four, out of the darkness.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

How shall any mortal say what is central here? Sometimes I think we shall be more ashamed in the glory of our theories of the atonement than of our sins. Perhaps the highest reach of impertinence, the final touch of insolence, will be found in our poor efforts to compress within a definition the meaning of the death of Christ. Let us, at any rate, stand unshod before the cross. If Moses were commanded to take the shoes from off his feet before the bush that burned with fire, and yet was not consumed, surely we, before the dying agonies of the Son of God, should have bowed hearts.

Much of the discussion of the meaning of the cross seems little separated from a mere psychological interest—a cold, scientific analysis of the mind of Christ in His sufferings. How could the Holy Spirit interpret aright those holy mysteries to a callous curiosity?

I have long believed that the Scriptures are absolutely self-interpreting, and, in particular, that the deeper mysteries of the person, teachings and work of Christ are accompanied by words which yield, to reverent minds, a clue to their right interpretation. I do not mean that such interpretative words are the exclusive explanations, for I

look upon the Apostolic writings as inspired commentaries on the Gospels, but only that Christ Himself gives the authoritative first clue.

If this be true, we are to find the deepest meaning of the crucifixion in His desolate cry: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The other six utterances from the cross present no difficulty. Partly Godward, partly manward, they are simple. But what shall we say of this?

We must say, first of all, that the forsaking was real. The notion that Christ so identified Himself with the woe and sorrow of humanity that He spoke as it were representatively: "Why hast thou forsaken *us?*" is inadequate because Christ knew that so far from having forsaken humanity in its dire need, God had "so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The words in the 22d Psalm which immediately follow those quoted by our Lord make that clear. "Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee and were delivered; they trusted in thee, and were not confounded." Then follows that which also was in our Lord's mind: "But I am a worm, and no man." No, we are face to face with the fact that a holy God forsook, in the hour of His dire extremity, the only sinless man who ever lived.

And our reverence for that infinite Love whom we call God, and adore and love, requires us to say in the second place, that there must have been an absolute necessity for that forsaking. Thrice the Father had spoken from heaven concerning that holy forsaken One: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Was He doing something now with which the Father was displeased? Impossible!

And the Scriptures require us to say, in the third place, that the holy sinless one was there on the cross, identifying himself in some sense so infinite that we cannot wholly understand it, with the sin of man. "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree." Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way and Jehovah hath caused the iniquities of us all to meet on him." Even deeper in its awful tragic mystery of meaning is that word: "He hath *made him to be sin* for us—who knew no sin."

And now we understand a little why the sinless One was forsaken. He was sufferng in our stead. The penalty of sin—separation from God, was being borne by Him that it might not be borne by us. He was vindicating that primal law of the moral universe which, as even Plato discovered, "rivets together" sin and suffering.

THE RESURRECTION.

(John xx: 11-23.)

I. The Analysis.

1. The weeping woman. Peter and the others could be satisfied to know the truth; Mary must go on to find *Him.* The same contrast is often seen to this day. Some believers live on doctrines; others, knowing the doctrines too, cannot be satisfied without Himself.

2. The unrecognized Christ. Mary "supposed" Him to be the gardener. Supposings are poor things. Christ's own mother went a day's journey "supposing Him to be in the company," only to find at night that she had gone a whole day without Him.

3. He calleth His own sheep by name, "Mary."

4. Peace through the shed blood, and the Spirit outbreathed and inbreathed.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The doctrinal heart of this lesson is, of course, the fact of the resurrection, and the scriptural implications which go with that fact. Paul makes the verity of the Gospel message to depend on the historicity of the resurrection of the body of Jesus Christ. "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not." The last clause, as we see, associating with the resurrection of Christ the future resurrection of the believer.

There is peculiar need in our day of the reaffirmation of this fundamental truth of the Christian faith. Indeed, from the earliest times there has been manifested a special enmity of Satan toward this particular doctrine. "How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up?"

Hymenæus and Philetus "erred, saying that the resurrection had passed already," and so overthrew the faith of some. Paul declared that error to be a "gangrene" in the Christian faith.

The early church did not err, but there were erroneous teachings on this most vital subject; and it was a sense of the need of constant restatement of the basal truths of Christianity which led to the establishment of what is called the church year. This expedient is open to the grave objection that it establishes "times and seasons," and the observance of "days," against the spirit of the present dispensation,

but some such repeated testimony to the pillar truths *is* necessary.

But Christ, in His recorded words as given in our lesson does not make the fact that He was risen the central thing. The emphasis of His words falls rather on the missionary impulse. It is not that He did not at once give every proof of the fact that he was risen, but that this was to Him self-evident, and he sought to turn at once the newly awakened hope and courage and zeal of His disciples toward the regions beyond.

This may be said to form the *practical* heart of the resurrection lesson, as the fact forms the *doctrinal* heart.

The emphatic word of that resurrection morning is, "Go tell." (Matt. xxviii: 7, 9, 10, 19; Mark xvi: 15; Luke xxiv: 46-49; John xx: 21). The disciples' understandings were opened that they might understand the Scriptures, but that to the end that "repentance and remission of sins might be preached in His name among all nations." The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord, but He said: "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

In Matthew's account the missionary impulse comes out with special emphasis. "Go quickly and tell . . . and as they went to tell . . . Jesus met them . . . then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell."

In John's account, which is our especial lesson for today, the missionary impulse is enforced by that saying of our Lord's which has been so perverted by the papacy: "Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained."

On these words, as all know, have been built the tremendous pretensions of the papacy in respect of sins. This is not the place in which to expose those pretensions. Surely, the words mean something, and that meaning must be inex-

pressibly solemn. Is it not this: that Christ has put into our hands, administratively, the only possible means by which men may receive the remission of their sins—the Gospel? "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?"

No, the responsibility for the remission of sins is not on a priestly hierarchy, but on us.

THE MESSAGE OF THE RISEN CHRIST.

(Rev. i: 10-20.)

I. The Analysis.

1. The command to write. Verses 10, 11.
2. The Patmos vision. Verses 12-20 (see "Heart").

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The lesson title is inexact. What we have in this lesson is not a message of the risen Christ, but a vision of the risen Christ himself. The message follows in chapters ii to xxii.

It is significant that John, the beloved disciple whom we count to have been most intimate with Jesus, who reclined on His breast at the last supper, who had walked and talked with Him, fell at His feet as one dead when he saw the risen Christ in His glory.

It should provoke inquiry. It is not the heart of this lesson and so I pass it with some questions for our further thought. Is He not the unchanging One, "that same Jesus?" Undoubtedly. Why, then, did John who knew Him so well find the revelation of His glory so overpowering? Was it not

because John then for absolutely the first time saw Him as He essentially *is?* In the mount of transfiguration John had seen Him in the glory of the millennial kingdom; a glory subdued to the capacity of man to behold it; now he saw "that same Jesus in the glory which He had with the Father before the world was." And, ought we not to pray and worship in the full sense of *all* that has been revealed concerning our adorable Lord?

In the gospels we have His glory veiled in the humanity of the Carpenter; in the Patmos vision we have His glory unveiled, and these two portraits blend, or should blend in our thought of Him. Because He is the gentle One of Galilee and Judea we will come into His very arms; but because He is the infinite God we will come reverently. There was no "dear Jesus" and "sweet Jesus" that day on Patmos.

But we are, I think, to find the heart of this lesson in what John saw that wonderful Lord's day when he was in the Spirit. He saw the risen Christ in the plenitude of divine power and glory in the midst of the churches. He wore His highpriestly robes, signifying intercession (Heb. vii: 24, 25), and a girdle, which always signifies service. Thus clothed and girded, He was in the midst of His churches on earth. As such, and as there, we are to conceive Him through this whole dispensation.

And He gives these churches on earth a most significant name. He calls them "golden candlesticks," or "lampstands." It is at once a definition and a test. A lampstand is something which exists for a purpose—to hold up a light. It does not exist for its own sake. Christ is the Light of the world, and the business of His lampstands is to hold Him up. When the churches become self-conscious, self-centred, they are sure to attract attention to themselves, not to the Light.

Minot's Ledge Light is a wonderful triumph of engineering skill, but its business is to hold up Boston Light, and the storm-tossed mariner who catches its beckoning gleam through the darkness of the tempest and makes the harbor which he had despaired of, thinks little of the tower, but much of the light.

When the eloquence of the preacher, or the magnificence of the architecture, or the beauty of the stained glass windows, or the attractiveness of the choir have come to be the things for which a church is most remarked, we may be sure the Light is lowered, or dimmed, or withdrawn.

And these candlesticks were of gold, and gold is the symbol of divine righteousness. The Light of the world is to be held aloft in no compromise with the world which is at once to enlighten and rebuke. It admits of no use of *tainted money;* no offering of that which is unclean on the altar of the Lord.

But how blessed that the risen Christ is in the midst of the candlesticks even though they are very faulty; even though He is immediately to raise many a searching issue with them. Ephesus had left first love; Pergamos had settled down comfortably in the world; Thyatira was married to the heathen Jezebel; Sardis had a name to live and was dead, and Laodicea was a disgust to His holy soul, but He is still in the midst of the churches.

In these churches we have a prophetic foreview of the seven phases through which the church on earth is to pass; and it is most solemn that in the last or present phase the risen Christ is *outside the door.* With the self-satisfaction and self-glorification of Laodicea He has no part.

THE HEAVENLY HOME.

(Rev. xxii: 1-11.)

I. The Analysis.

1. The conditions of perfect blessedness, verses 1-5 (see "Heart"). 2. The consummation and its effect, verses 6-9. The imminency of His coming, verses 10, 11.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The twenty-second chapter of the Revelation does not give, as the lesson title would indicate, a vision of our heavenly home, but of the glory and blessedness of the millennial earth. The river is the river of Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel xlvii), and the conditions of blessing those which shall obtain when Messiah's kingdom is set up.

But heavenly blessedness is not a matter of locality, though doubtless heaven is a locality. The conditions of heavenly blessing are the same wherever they exist, and the millennium is but "the days of heaven on earth" (Deut. xi: 21). The heart of the lesson, therefore, I judge to lie in those conditions as set forth therein. These are seven, two negative, five positive. That is, if felicity is to be perfect some things must not be, and some things must be.

The two negative conditions are, "no more curse"; "no night." The "curse" of God is His sorrowful assent to humanity's final choice of the things which carry curses in their very nature and being. "As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him; as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him" (Psa. cix: 17). But in the heavenly home no one will desire the things which are accursed, but all will delight in the will of a God who is perfect love.

So of "night," or darkness, which is always in Scripture

associated with evil, and with separation from God and from the good. To say, "there shall be no night there," is to say, there shall be no evil there. Herbert Spencer has defined heaven (in which, by the way, he did not believe) as "A perfect being, in a perfect environment." That is what our heaven is to be: a perfect environment. No curse, no night.

Then, on the positive side, which is the great matter, after all, five wonderful conditions of blessing are enumerated.

"The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it." And that means the perfect reign of perfect love. Love is the only ultimate authority. Of love only could it be said: "Love never faileth." Everything else fails. Power has a thousand limitations—even almighty power. The almightiness of God could, indeed crush us into dust, but only the almightiness of His love can make us love Him, and, till we love Him, and obey because we love, He esteems nothing as done. That is the inner reason why we are not under the law but under grace. That the throne of God is there means, in Paul's great phrase, that "Grace reigns through righteousness." But it is the throne of the Lamb, too; that is, the regnancy of *redeeming* love; the love that "loved *me,* and gave himself for *me.*"

Again, our heavenly home is a sphere of service—the service of love. Perfect blessedness there could not be in inactivity. We are to have bodies incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and spirits made perfect in immortal vigor; how could perfect felicity for such things be without service in that larger sphere of life?

We are to "see His face." Love cannot be perfectly content, still less satisfied, without the presence of the beloved one. The face which we shall see is the face that was buffeted for us; the "visage that was more marred than any

man." It will express His love for us, and answer the love which we bestow through His matchless grace.

His name will be in our foreheads. That speaks of perfect conformity to His likeness. It is the blessing which logically follows seeing His face. "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." To be with Him and to be like Him—that alone would seem heaven.

But we too shall reign. Kings by the new birth, we are now keeping the hour of His patience (Rev. iii: 10). Then we shall be associated with Him in authority. Doubtless in the lesson the sphere of that authority is the millennial earth; but the essential thing in royalty is not the sphere of rule, but true kingliness of being, and to that shall we, now so easily ruled by self and sin, be at last brought. No man is truly a king who must be ruled by external power.

ABSTINENCE FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS.

(1 Cor. x: 23-33.)

I. The Analysis.

1. The principle of Gospel liberty (verses 23-33). 2. The principle of governing life by that which will edify (verses 23-33). 3. The principle of governing life by the law of love (verses 23-33).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

Perhaps no part of the Pauline message has been more perverted than that to which the question of meats gave rise. It cannot be necessary to explain what that question was. The Corinthians and other Greco-Roman converts from paganism had been in the habit both of feasting in the temples on meat which had been exposed before idols,

and of purchasing such meat in the markets. In their heathen state all this stood connected with the idolatrous worship. After conversion the question of continuing to eat such meat inevitably arose. Was it not holding on to so much of the old false religion?

Into that question the Holy Spirit by Paul entered boldly. The whole answer is found, not in our lesson alone, but in the analogous discussion in the eighth chapter. Taking the teaching as a whole, the principles laid down are these:

1. There is a peril of conceit, of arrogance, in judging concerning such matters; a danger of assuming to have "knowledge" (1 Cor. viii: 1-3).

2. The idol is nothing, and the meat undefiled by being exposed before the idol. Here the principle is that a thing good in itself is not to be rejected because some people make a wrong use of it. In parts of Europe "blessed" candles are offered for sale. The apostle would say: "The so-called blessing has not injured the candle: it will give just as much light as an unblessed candle."

3. Concerning all such matters no Christian may judge his brother, or despise his brother. "Neither if we eat are we the better; neither if we eat not are we the worse." (1 Cor. viii: 8). "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth" (Rom. xiv: 3, 4). "Let no man, therefore, judge you (*i. e.,* be your conscience) in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath" (Col. ii: 16).

This is the law constantly and shamelessly violated by the strict. The Christian who does *not* play cards, or

attend the theater, is bitter, outspoken, and condemnatory of the Christian who does.

4. The law of prudence. This law is for self-enforcement, in the forum of each Christian's own conscience. It is not a law by which Christian may judge Christian, for that would be an infraction of the third principle. Paul states this law of prudence: "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Cor. vi: 12).

The law of prudence, then, is self-applied in the personal conscience; it is *never for external application.* And it sets up a two-fold standard: "Is it expedient (profitable); does it edify (build up)?" And, "Does it expose me to the danger of being brought under bondage to the habit of it?

As to the first, the whole man, spirit, soul, body, must be taken into account. "Does it enlarge the mental capacities? Does it develop along noble lines the emotional and volitional part of me? Does it contribute to bodily well-being?" If it does not; or if observation and experience show that along the line of the proposed indulgence slavery to habit may be formed, then the thing is to be summarily rejected.

5. The law of love. And here the Christian comes out and looks about him. It is not now solely a question for *himself*—a question to be settled by the *fourth* principles. He now takes account of himself as a member of the body of Christ; as his brother's keeper. He does not come out to judge his *brother,* but to judge himself as responsible for his brother's edification.

He will not eat meat in an idol's temple, even though he knews the meat to be good and nourishing, and the idol but a block of stone, because a weak brother, just escaping

from heathenism, having still a conscience hurt by anything pertaining to idolatry, might be led back to do what, even mistakenly, might give him a bad conscience.

In other words, to the law of prudence, with its questions: "Will it profit *me?* May it enslave *me?*" The Christian adds the law of love with its question: "If I do this thing, may I injure my brother?"

Two cautionary words of vital importance:

First.—The law of love, like the law of prudence, is for my own self-government; it is not a club in the hands of a fanatic or a puritan that *he* may govern me.

Second.—I am to judge what, in my conduct, would harm or help my brother by the *Scriptures,* and not by human standards, which may be strict with the strictness of pharisaism, and far from the large wholesomeness of Jesus Christ.

In other words, I may owe a duty of enlightenment and of enlargement to my weak brother. *Never forget that in the performance of that duty Christ broke with the strict religionists of His day, and incurred the reproach of being "gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners."*

Lectures and Addresses

THE BOOK OF JOB.

By C. I. Scofield.

If we are to do anything with such a book as Job within the compass of one hour, it is evident that we must accept certain limitations. Obviously it will be impossible to make a close study of its forty-two chapters of human reasoning and divine revelation. Evidently, we are shut up to a panoramic view of the book. Our study must bear the same relation to the book that an artist's sketch does to the finished landscape. But even a sketch may be accurate; may indicate faithfully, and in due proportion, the greater features of the landscape, and that with God's help we may hope to do.

The critical studies of the day have raised certain questions about this book to which we may for a moment give attention. We are told that Job is a work of the imagination, and that it belongs to a comparatively late period in the Hebrew commonwealth. Against that contention it is only necessary to say that it rests upon mere literary opinion, without a shred of proof. But a conclusive answer is found in the book itself. It is a book, as you know, in which the whole question of the accountability of man as a morally responsible being to a holy God is elaborately discussed. Now in that discussion the ten commandments, the Mosaic revelation concerning priesthood and sacrifice, and the mighty writings of the prophets are never once mentioned. And not only so, but the thoughts of the speakers have no coloring from them. Even Jehovah does not appeal against Job to His statutes. We say, therefore, that the book is

what it assumes to be—it goes back of Moses to primitive, patriarchal times. It may even antedate the flood.

That Job is an historical personage we know from the inspired use of his name in James v: 11, and Ezekiel xiv: 14, 20. Indeed, these references to the troubled patriarch show the truth of the principle laid down—that if the law existed as a divine revelation when Job was written, it would have been impossible to keep its shadow off the book.

Turning now to the book itself we ask ourselves as to its central problem. Here we have no difficulty. The central question discussed and answered in Job is, why do the godly suffer? It is an ever-living question, for the godly still suffer—and often, as in Job's case, with no apparent cause. Our suffering brothers are better than we, and yet they are bereaved while our families remain unbroken, are ill while we are well, are diminished in estate while we prosper. Why?

Incidentally, almost the whole sphere of man's relation to God is brought into the discussion. And let us remember that all this is not set out in a dogmatic way, essay fashion. It is not an academic discussion. A living man, bereft of children, estate, and health is the subject of it.

Next, let us think of the literary form of the book. I need not remind you that in that book which is at once the only divine and the most truly human of writings, the Bible, the Holy Spirit uses every form of literary expression. It has history, biography, autobiography, and revelation, and these in prose, poetry and drama. Job is a drama. I do not mean that the story of Job was cast into that form, but that it all *occurred* in that form.

There are two scenes, one supra-mundane, the other on the earth. Of the first we have no description; the second is the ash heap outside an Oriental town.

In the first scene Jehovah and Satan are the *dramatis-personæ.*

Open to the first chapter, sixth verse: "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them." Oh! the mystery of the permitted presence of Satan in the presence of God! The accuser of the brethren began this work very early in the history of the race. "And the Lord said unto Satan, whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord and said, From going to and from in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job?" Here is the character of Job as described by the Lord Himself.

"There is none like him in the earth." The best man God had! "A perfect and an upright man." Now the word "perfect" here is the same word we have in the seventeenth of Genesis, when Abram gets that marvelous revelation of El Shaddai when He says: "Walk before Me and be thou perfect." "And Abram fell on his face." The word simply means unmixed, sincere. It does not mean fully sanctified, or dead to sin, but it means not double minded. It is the equivalent of what the Lord said of Nathaniel, "An Israelite in whom there is no guile." And this is Job. "Hast thou considered my servant Job, for there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil."

Do not imagine, dear friends, that in the last chapter of this book you have the conversion of that patriarch. He is God's man from the beginning of the book, and the best man God has on earth.

"Then Satan answered the Lord and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath, on every

side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will renounce thee to thy face."

That was Satan's theory about Job's godliness. Men are good because it pays men to be good. Satan would perhaps resent it, but I have no doubt that he is the author of that proverb "Honesty is the best policy." I think it came straight out of the pit. I hate to hear Christians talk that kind of talk. We are honest to please Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light; because it is blessed, not because it is politic—neither is it always politic.

"And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord." But this gives us no light, we say, this deepens the darkness of the problem, Why do the godly suffer?

Yes, God Himself sometimes puts His dearest children into Satan's sieve. "Satan hath desired to have thee," said Christ to Peter, "That he might sift thee like wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." We have here the same thing. Satan is suffered to have the same power over circumstances of our lives. That is one fact of revelation and it is terrible. But invariably, along with it is another fact of revelation: the power of Satan is strictly and absolutely limited by the power of God, and it is comforting. And another fact of revelation: Satan is never permitted to work destructively upon the children of God. Christ put Peter into Satan's sieve, but He Himself fixed the time and way of Peter's death. (John xxi: 18, 19.)

Then you know what happened. Everything went but Job's health. Satan's worst enmity, at that stage of things,

could not have touched that patriarch's body, but only what he had.

"Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and fell down upon the ground and worshipped; and he said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

How many a saint of God has found those words helpful to express what the heart wanted to say, but in its anguish, could not find the words. It is a great thing to see it is the Lord. Job does not say, "Satan hath taken away." Instrumentally, he did, undoubtedly, but he does not say "Satan hath taken." When Paul was in the prison of Nero he did not call himself "the prisoner of Nero," but "the prisoner of the Lord." He knew that Nero could have no power over him but by his Lord's will. Then we have another of these interviews in the second chapter.

"Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job? for there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil; and he still holdeth fast his integrity although thou movedst me against him to destroy him without cause."

"And Satan answered the Lord and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." What a lie that is, too! See the martyrs in the flames! Will they give all that they have, their trust in God, to save their lives when by burning a little pinch of incense on the flame before the image of Caesar they could go free, but they will not burn it! they burn themselves instead? Yes, that is the

devil's lie. "But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face."

Satan has a contemptible opinion of humanity, and I do not wonder. It is, only God who says, "I will make a man more precious than gold." Satan despises man and hates man because God has redeemed him. And man puts such a poor estimate upon himself. He sells out so cheaply. Down South, where I lived before the war, $800 to $2,000 was the price of a man. I have known a good many white men sell out a great deal cheaper than that.

"And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; only spare his life." You see the two things involved? Satan cannot kill that man. Do you suppose anything can kill a child of God until God is ready to take Him? He is immortal until His Father says, "Come home." There is a word in that first chapter of Revelation concerning Christ: "I am He that liveth, and was dead, and, behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of Hades and of death." He has the keys. Satan cannot open the door of death for you or for me. It cannot open until Christ opens it. Blessed be God, we are not subject to all kinds of happenings.

"And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand, only spare his life. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat among the ashes."

And now we come to the second scene in this drama. Wonderful words are said by, and above, that ash heap. Five persons beside Job come upon the scene where the afflicted patriarch sits desolate and anguished.

First of all comes his wife. Her counsel is brief: "Curse God and die."

Why do we smile at that? The whole world does. Why do we never think of a broken-hearted mother bereaved of her children, bereft of her home, and sore with her unavailing yearning over her stricken husband? She says her bitter word, and passes. For one I am glad that motherhood comes to her again; that once more she holds babes to her heart. I have no disposition to make fun of Job's wife.

And now to poor, desolate Job enter the famous three friends: "Now when Job's three friends heard all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz,...and Bildad,...and Zophar,...and they made an appointment together to come to mourn with him, and to comfort him." No wonder they are called, "Job's comforters." "And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice and wept;... for they saw that his grief was very great."

"After this Job opened his mouth and cursed his day," but not his God.

It is impossible, within the limitations of one address, to take up and analyze the speehes of these four men, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar and Job. All that we may hope to do is to summarize—to describe the point of view of each toward the real problem of Job's sufferings. Perhaps even so much would not be worth while, if it were not that these, especially the three friends, are representative men. They stand for three kinds of religious people, and for the attitude of those three kinds of people toward the real problems of human life.

And this is unspeakably serious, for Eliphaz, and Bildad, and Zophar, stand for the great mass of formal religionists, and they have nothing but words for this poor old world on the ash heap, and so the world never dreams of looking to the church for any real help.

Some characteristics these three men have in common. They are all dogmatists. Each is perfectly sure of his theory of the cause and cure of Job's sufferings. Each is so possessed by his theory that he has no real sympathy for Job. Like all mere dogmatists, their hearts are as hard as the nether millstone, and of arctic coldness. And they all have a conventional God. Their God is a bundle of attributes, not a living, thinking, loving Being. Like all religious dogmatists they are cocksure about God. They know what He will do, and why. Furthermore, they are at one in the theory that Job is a hypocrite; that his fair outward life hides some secret sin for which he is under the terrible flail of God.

Their differences lie in the source of their authority as interpreters of the providences of God.

Eliphaz, then, stands for the religious dogmatist who has had a mysterious experience, and, therefore, what he says is true.

"Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. In thoughts from the vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up," etc. (iii: 13-15).

That is it! Dared Job, who had never had an "experience," contend against *him?* His theory was the authoritative one because he had had an "experience." We know thee well, O Eliphaz. Thy lineal descendants are with us still.

Bildad is a religious dogmatist of an even more intolerable type. He peddles religious platitudes; he is the prophet of the obvious; a passer on of easy cant. No wonder Job, an

able and serious man, breaks out, "Who does not know these things?"

It is Bildad who comes to you when death has emptied your arms of one dearer to you than life, and tells you that God is good. But, somehow, Bildad is always held in much reputation for sanctity. "Isn't Bildad a *good* man?" they say. He says an undisputed thing in such an unctuous way that he carried all before him, while souls racked with anguish, cry out upon him for a babbling fool.

Zophar is yet another kind of dogmatist—perhaps the most hopeless of all. Zophar is a traditionalist. He appeals to the fathers. "Knowest thou not this of old?" All this, of course, is not to say that these men do not utter many truths. But over against all that they say stands Jehovah's sentence:

"The Lord said to Eliphaz, the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right." After that, it is useless to pick from the chaff of their words the few grains of the wheat of truth.

Now we have more difficulty with Elihu. I will say quite frankly, I have read and re-read his words. There is a wonderful unfolding of truth in a certain sense, in the thirty-third chapter, for example, about the finding of the ransom. He says a great many things which are true and paves the way for Jehovah to come upon the scene.

Then Jehovah takes up the case Himself, and it is a wonderful method. He brings Job into a consciousness of His power, and that always reaches the conscience. What was it that followed the miraculous draught of fishes "Depart from me for I am a sinful man." Divine power, and there is more than that; the folly of trying to solve the problems of life without God. When Jehovah is done He has a

broken man before Him. God was after the death of self in that man; He was after getting Job to see himself. Those other men were occupied with what they believed Job's sinful *actions*. The twenty-ninth chapter is occupied with what Job was; a good man, but too conscious of it. In that chapter the personal pronouns "I" and "me" occur forty-five times, God is mentioned five times. He was a sincere man, but too well aware of it.

What does he say when Jehovah has revealed Himself to him? "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear." A real faith may be founded on testimony. Job had a testimony of God. He believed that testimony, and upon it was based a faith that stood all the shocks of suffering and loss. But now he has a vision of God Himself.

What is a vision in its essential meaning You will find in the Old Testament that no two visions are circumstanced alike, but the effect is always identical. It is an unseen thing made real. You believed it all the time; now it is knowing the thing. Job says, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee." Did he mean that his mortal eye saw the uncreated One? Oh, no. He meant that God had become the actual One to him.

Now what happened to Job after the dealing had done its work, and he had seen and judged himself? His fruitfulness was doubled. Also he was made a priest to stand between God and his three friends, and they had to come to God through him. Double fruitfulness, and a higher form of service. And now we see the divine solution of the problem of the book. How shall I state that solution Let me use inspired words.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away;

and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit."

"Now, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them who are exercised thereby."

The sufferings of the godly are not penal, but purifying, medicinal, healing.

THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

We are to look together for a little time to-night at the Song of Solomon, and I need not detain you for one moment with what the natural man has said about this most precious book. There is not a line in it for the natural man. It is a profanation for him to look into, and there is very little in it for a carnal saint. If we can be satisfied with the world, even though we be Christ's, satisfied with a kind of formal fellowship with Him, going on in a kind of indifferent way, I fear this book will have very little to say to us. But if we have entered into His heart, if we have entered into the heart and purpose of Him who purchased us to be His Bride, that Bride whom He is now cleansing by the washing of water by the Word, and whom He is to present to Himself without spot or wrinkle, with exceeding joy, then I believe our souls will be fed with this book.

The key of this song we have in the expression that fell from the lips of John the Baptist. In the third chapter of John, the twenty-ninth verse, he says: "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly."

The bridegroom and the Bride! These we have in the

Song of Solomon. Now I need not dwell at all on any explanation of which might seem at first to be a contradiction, namely, that we do not find the church in the Old Testament. Very true. We do not find the church described in the Old Testament. There is nothing in the Old Testament from which, apart from the New, one would have any conception whatever of *the* church. But now that we have the New Testament revelation, and can use it to look back on the Old Testament, we see two things. First, that allowance is dispensationally made in the prophecies for the Church to come in. The Old Testament saints did not know it; but now that we do know it, we can see that there was a place made for it. Another thing. There are, specially in the Brides of the Pentateuch, wonderful foreshadowings of this bride relationship to Jesus Christ. Adam and Eve prefigured the Church. In the fifth chapter of Ephesians there is a direct quotation of the words of Adam to Eve. I need not remind you of Isaac's bride, and of Joseph's bride. Wonderful prefigurings, and sacred, of this holy relationship. "Bone of His bone, flesh of his flesh," lifted into the very highest place, made one with Him. It is marvelous! Not merely as members of His body we are one; we are baptized by one Spirit into this body. Just as there was identification between Eve and the body of Adam, just so there is identification between us and the Lord Jesus. It is not a singular belief of mine, for I sit at the feet of the most spiritual saints down through all the ages, when I find in the Song of Solomon the heart of the Bridegroom for his Bride, and I believe we may trace there the wonderful deepening and increase and growth of her love to Him, and appreciation for Him.

Chrysostom called it the holy of holies of the Bible. Dispensationally, the book of John is that; but here we may

say we are in the very heart of Christ; and if Moses must put off the shoes from his feet when he stood on holy ground, how unshod must we be in soul and spirit.

Bengel said: "It is a very touchstone of my spiritual state. When I come to it cold of heart, it has no voice for me; but when I come to it from my knees, and with communion for Him whom my soul loveth, then it breathes the very breath of divine life for me in the very closest and holiest of possible relationships." This is not a book which gives us the heavenly side of the relationship between the Lord Jesus and His Church. The bride is seen here, not in her perfected, but in her unperfected state. We are to learn here what Jesus is thinking of His Church now, when she is unperfected, and full of blemishes, as the bride in the book of Canticles was. We see existing a real love by her for Him, and we see the workings of His love for her.

The book shows two lapses and restorations in the part of the bride from communion with the bridegroom. No lapse from salvation, no severing of relationship; and the structure of the book hinges very largely on this. There are two places where we are permitted to see the bride out of communion with Him.

I believe the book to fall into six divisions. In the first, the bride is brought to the bridegroom, and into restful communion with Him. Chapter i: 1 to ii: 7.

Second division. The bride returns to her former home, a lapse from communion; a separation, not of divorce, but a separation in the continuity of fellowship, but is brought back and is tenderly admonished. ii: 8 to iii: 5.

Third division. iii: 6 to v: 1. Happy communion. Then a long passage of communion between the heavenly bridegroom and his restored bride.

Fourth division. v. 2, 3, discloses a separation of heart.

She does not go away from Him, but she for a time has no longing in her heart, while the purpose of His heart is supreme toward her. It is a different kind of lapse from communion, but we shall see that later.

Fifth division. v: 4 to vi: 3. The bride now seeks Him and testifies of His beauty.

Sixth division. vi: 4 to viii: 14. Unbroken fellowship. In the first division we have the Bride brought into relationship with the Bridegroom and entering into intercommunion with Him. It is not on the highest level. We get something far more intimate later on; she has learned Him better. I will take a few passages under these heads or divisions.

The book opens with the inscription, "The Song of Solomon." Then Solomon is the author and the penman. We have in the second, third and fourth verses the voice of the Bride who has given Him her heart and expresses to Him her first love, so to speak. "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." "Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth." You see what won her. What won you to Christ? A sense of our needs brought us to Him. Many of us came to Christ with very little sense of His loveliness or of His beauty. We came not to Him with love, but we came with faith and trust, and then He won our hearts. Then He unveiled His beauty. We saw Him there on the Cross, that wonderful spectacle, the God-man dying for us. We loved Him because He first loved us, and then there came into our hearts, not so much a sense of our love for Him as of the beauty of Christ, and of His great love for us, and His name became to us as ointment poured forth. The burden of sin rolled away, and His name became to us the sweetest of all names. Remember, that when we have His name spoken of in this way, we are to think of His full designation in the New Testament, not

in shadow, but the substance, the Lord Jesus Christ. When we say it, is there any other name like that? "Draw me, we will run after thee," and then next "the King hath brought me into His chambers." "The upright love thee." Now, it is a love relationship. Remember we began with a trust relationship.

I remember when I was an unconverted man living in the West, a practicing lawyer there, I met a famous evangelist who said to me, "Do you love Jesus?" I said no. And he replied, "Well, you never will be saved until you love Jesus." He meant well, but his instruction was unwise. Our first touch of Him is a despairing touch, and we love Him because He saves us. Thus love wins our love.

Notice in the first stage of the book, the bride is occupied with herself. "I am black," she says. How quickly He answers, "but comely." She is beautiful to Him.

"Oh ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept."

This is apt to be the case with a Christian brought into a conscious and known relationship with Jesus Christ. The first thought, and properly so, is, "I am black"; in myself there is nothing to fit me for this place, for this intimacy. It is not good to be occupied all the time with ourselves. He is not occupied with our blackness. It is possible for a saint of God to be so pre-occupied with what he is in the old Adam as to pass his whole life in a kind of perpetual discussion of a dead body. Now why should we not receive the sentence of death so that we trust not in ourselves but in Christ who raiseth us from the dead; and why, forever and forever be occupied with the old man who is all vile, and

nothing but vile Now and then, when the Lord wants to show us ourselves, it may be well to take one look at that dead body, as Paul calls it, but let us not be occupied with it. It is an evidence of immaturity. The Bride is to be occupied with Him; she is not talking about herself.

There are some very sweet things in this preliminary stage of fellowship. "Tell me oh my beloved, where thy flock feeds?" and he answers, "Oh, thou fairest among women." Hear that, will you? Well, it is just love, just love. But suppose she should keep on all the time by saying, "Oh, I am black," their fellowship would not progress very much. Let us think His thoughts. The old man is always bad, but why turn aside to dig it up? Remember this, for after awhile it will get to be a habit, and habit is a kind of cant. There was a gentleman who had a habit of saying, "Oh, my miserable black heart." A friend of his became so familiar with it that he would greet him with, "Well, friend George, how is your black heart now?" Oh, no, we cannot understand it when He says "fairest of women," but let us be glad He does say it.

He sees us in His own perfection, imparted and incorporated into His bride, so that to His love, there is answering love. We are going to be like Him, just as beautiful as Christ. When He looks at His bride He does not see the blackness; His blood has cleansed her, you and me.

Then she speaks in the ninth verse, "I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots." The best comparison she can make now. What does He say "Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold." Then comes that beautiful passage, and He unfolds Himself to her. You know it is only when we are in communion with the Lord Jesus, when we come into His presence to rest in His love, to commune with

Him, not about our blackness, but about His beauty, to tell out in our poor way our heart-growing conception of His charms, it is then that we learn things about Him, it is then only He can unfold Himself.

Now look at the second chapter. "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys," and then He says a wonderful thing to her, "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters." Get that contrast. The Spirit of God is very fond of lilies. Then there is the thought of thorns. His Bride is like a lily. She answers back, "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons." Pretty good, but not like the other. Trees of the wood are very beautiful, and some yield fruit, and so she thinks of the apple tree. You see she does not know Him when He says, "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valley." It is a kind of figure of speech. He loves to disclose Himself. You know that "Beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Now in the second division, I see the Bride returns evidently to her former home. We do not know why. The Lord does not go and talk with His neighbors about His domestic affairs. The neighbors may see that something has happened. Let me read the eighth verse.

"The voice of my beloved, behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice." He is coming for her. What was the house we lived in? When we lapse back into the world He can bring us out; He can bring us back into fellowship. Hear her:

"My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." Over in our land the voice of the turtle is heard. Come back, my dear. Arise, my love, come away. Oh, are you in the world, my beloved? Hear this, "Arise and come away." There are better things in love's land. Newport is a poor place compared to love's land. Now here is the sweet admonition, "Oh, my dove." Fancy calling us that. That is the new nature. Hawk, bird of prey, by the old nature; dove by the new nature. "Oh my dove, that hideth in the clefts of the rock." He begins by reminding her of her place, safe in the cleft of the Rock. Bengel said, he entered into the heart of Christ by a great spear wound. Now that is where she is. She has been out of communion, but in a safe place, "in the secret places of the stairs." "Places" is italicized, showing it is a supplied word. Would the bride come up a public staircase as she comes into the presence of her dear bridegroom? Not a bit. A secret stair for her. Now the next thing "Let me see thy countenance." Come to me. Something else. "Let me hear thy voice." Oh, He wants us near, after we have lapsed from our fellowship with Him. He wants us to come to Him by the secret of the stairs, having access by the Spirit. And then He has got a tender little word, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines." The little foxes of tempers, faults, made much of and accentuated, and that makes a perpetual lot of little issues with Him.

Her confession here is very beautiful, down to the fifth verse of the third chapter. Then she breaks out in a beautiful song. "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness?" And he answers, "Behold, thou art fair."

We have that beautiful passage from the sixteenth verse of the third chapter to the first verse of the sixth. "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse." Beautiful communion.

Now comes that second lapse. Here is the bridegroom at the door. "I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night."

He is out there in the darkness on His mission. How does she answer "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?"

This washing represents the washing of the laver. In the beginning she was occupied with her blackness. Now she is occupied with her whiteness. If there is anything worse than to be occupied with your bad self, it is to be occupied with your good self. It represents that state of spirituality that becomes too sublimated to think of that world out in the darkness. There is a danger in a certain attainment of spirituality. You want to get with a few who can talk just like you, and who have wonderful experiences just like you.

"My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him. I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock."

Oh, so occupied with her own spirituality, and yet it all came from him, and now His gifts are occupying her, not Himself. "I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone." In the beginning of your fellowship you bore all sorts of things, but when the feet get washed, and the hands drip with perfumery and all spiritual graces, He will teach us the lesson. He went on, He could not wait, and now she seeks Him, poor thing.

You know the mother of our Lord went a whole day supposing Him to be in the company, and she turned back and sought Him for three days sorrowing. It does not do to take things for granted in our fellowship with Jesus Christ.

"I sought him but I could not find him; I called him but he gave me no answer. The watchman that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love. What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?"

What is your Christ more than Buddha? What is your Christ more than any one else? Then she breaks into that marvelous description of Him:

"My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.....His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely."

Now that is better than to say He is an apple tree in the trees of the wood. "He is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, O daughters of Jerusalem."

Then suddenly He comes. "Thou art beautiful O my love as Tirzah." Communion again. He can now take her into His thoughts for Israel. Then from the tenth verse to the fourteenth the bride gives a closing song. She is thinking not of herself, nor of herself, but of the great mission they two have. And it closes very beautifully, "Make haste, my beloved" like that refrain at the end of Revelation, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

If I have helped any of you to a better understanding of this book, then I may add one thing: Study it after prayer when you are sure you are in fellowship with Him. Not

when there is a cloud between you and Him; get restoration, and then when it is all sweet, ask Him to speak to you out of it.

THE CHURCH AND THE CHURCHES.*

I. The Church Which Is His Body.

Whoever reads with attention the Acts and the Epistles observes the frequent occurrence of the word church, in both the plural and singular forms of that word. Indeed, so constantly does the word recur that it is evidently of most urgent importance to the student of Scripture to understand its meanings. The Epistles, especially, concern the church and the churches. Very little is said about Israel, very little about the kingdom. It is the church which is prominently in view in this large and important part of the Bible. Evidently, then, it is impossible to read those writings intelligently unless we are able to define the various senses in which the Holy Spirit uses that word.

The Greek word, *ecclesia,* translated "church," is formed from *ek*—"out" or "out of," and *kalleo*—"to call," and in itself, therefore, signifies the "outcalled." But, since the word is never used of a single individual, but always of many individuals together, it takes on the larger meaning of an "outcalled assembly." It is thus appropriately used, not only of *the* New Testament church and of the New Testament churches, but also of Israel in the wilderness (Acts vii: 38), and of the town meeting of Ephesus (Acts xix: 32, 39, 41, "assembly").

*Addresses given at the Fourth Mid-winter Bible Conference, Boston, Mass., February 2-8, 1904.

The word means, in itself, no more than a called out assembly. The Israelites were called out of Egypt by the words of Moses and Aaron; the town meeting of Ephesus was called out of the mass of Ephesians by the guild of silversmiths; the New Testament church is called out of the mass of the inhabitants of the earth, Jews and Gentiles, by the preaching of the Gospel of the Grace of God. In each use of the word the distinctive character, privileges, and responsibilities of the called out assembly must be determined by the declarations of Scripture concerning each. But the mere use of the word church affords no more warrant for making the assembly of Israel in the wilderness identical with, or a part of, the New Testament *ecclesia,* than for so identifying the town meeting at Ephesus. As a matter of fact Israel in the wilderness and the New Testament church have but one thing in common—the same God.

In this, and the addresses which are to follow, we are to consider the word only as applied to the "church which is his body, the fullness of him which filleth all in all" (Eph. i: 22, 23), and to the local assemblies called churches in the Acts, Epistles, and in the Revelation; and we are first of all to look at the Scripture teaching concerning "the church which is his body."

The Historic Background.

The church is first mentioned in Scripture by our Lord Himself in the words recorded in Matthew xvi: 18, and that in a setting which is both interesting and illuminative.

Note, first, that our Lord does not mention the church until the rejection by Israel of the kingdom of heaven, and of Himself as King has become manifest. In Matt. xi: 16-24, Jesus declares the national rejection both of John the Baptist, the herald, and of Himself, the King. For that

generation there remained but judgment; and that great discourse closes with a wholly new message. It is no more "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," but: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—a very different proclamation.

In Matt. xii our Lord puts Himself morally outside of Israel, identifying Himself and His disciples with David and his followers in the time of the rejection of that king by Israel (Matt. xii: 1-4; 1 Sam. xx, xxi, xxii), and again (Matt. xii: 40-45) declares judgment upon that generation.

In Matt. xiii Jesus goes "out of the house" (Israel) and utters the "mysteries of the kingdom":—*i. e.,* those things which are to be fulfilled between His first and second advents, and which have already found their fulfillment in Christendom—the so-called "Christian world." Then, in Matthew xvi, He announces a purpose hitherto hidden in God (Eph. iii: 9, 10), and constituting something quite different from either the Old Testament foreview of the kingdom, or from "the mysteries of the kingdom" described in Matt. xiii; but which, like the mysteries of the kingdom, must be fulfilled between the first and second advents, namely, "I will build my church"—my "called out assembly."

In other words: Israel being under judicial blindness and rejection (Matt. xiii: 13-15), two things are announced to go on contemporaneously—the development in Christendom of the mixed condition—wheat and tares, good and bad fish—called "mysteries of the kingdom" (Matt. xiii: 11); and also that other "mystery" (Rom. xvi: 25; Eph. i: 9; iii: 4, 5), the church, which He purposed through the proclamation of Himself as "the Christ, the Son of the living God," to build upon Himself as the Rock foundation—a called out assembly, the church.

How the Church Is Formed.

Closely connected with our Lord's announcement of His purpose to build the church are repeated references to the baptism with the Holy Spirit; and these promises concerning the Spirit are, in turn, intimately associated with instructions for a world-wide preaching of the Gospel. The disciples were bidden to tarry at Jerusalem until endued with power from on high, before beginning the testimony to Christ, the effect of which has been the outcalling of the church (Luke xxiv: 46-49; Acts i: 4, 5, 8).

These two ideas are inseparably linked in the final instructions of Christ—the world-wide ministry, and the baptism with the Spirit. And 1 Cor. xii: 12, 13 supplies the fact which links the church inseparably to the baptism and the preaching:—"As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

That, then, is the church, of which Jesus Christ, crucified, risen, ascended, glorified, seated, is the Head (Eph. i: 22, 23). That this is a fact of immense *positional* importance to the individual believer is evident. Indeed, the whole positional doctrine of the Epistles is based upon this great fact, that every believer is thus positionally identified with Christ Himself. It is a fact which explains and defines the important expression, "in Christ Jesus." Baptized into Christ by the Spirit, every believer is "in Christ," or "in Christ Jesus" (Eph. i: 1, 3, 4, 6-13; ii: 6, 10, etc.). This exalted position is especially the theme of Ephesians. But it is necessary to remember that our union to Christ as members of His body is effected by that same baptism with the Holy

Spirit which our Lord connected with the whole world-wide service of preaching the Gospel.

Evidently the truth that the church which our Lord announced His intention to build would be composed of believers baptized into Himself by the Spirit, was one of the "many things" which the disciples were not "able to bear" until after they should be illuminated by the Spirit, and which were reserved for the great ministry of Paul (John xvi: 12, 13; Eph. iii: 3-10).

But, now that the revelation through Paul has been made, we may, nay we must, in coming to an understanding of how the church is formed, unite the three facts—the world-wide preaching, the baptism with the Spirit, and the building of the church.

In other words, Christ is building His church through the church itself, by means of the baptism with the Spirit. An illustration of this is afforded by the events of Pentecost. On that day the first event was the uniting, by the baptism with the Holy Spirit, of the gathered disciples to Christ their risen Head. But those disciples were, as we know from 1 Cor. xii: 7-31, united to Christ as living members of His body in an orderly way with reference to the *activities* of that body. Some were made apostles, some prophets, some teachers, some miracle-workers, some healers, some helpers, some rulers, some speakers of tongues (1 Cor. xii: 28, etc.). And all this was done *sovereignly,* in God's own wisdom (1 Cor. xii: 11, 18, 24).

Furthermore, these members, thus united to Christ and gifted by the Spirit for the various activities of the world-wide ministry were, like the members of the human body, subject to the will of the Head. "There are differences of administrations, but the same Lord" (1 Cor. xii: 5.) And, in ordering as Head and Lord the uses of His members, He

distributes the gifted members, here apostles, to do apostolic work; there prophets, to minister *that* gift; in another place evangelists; and elsewhere pastors and teachers (Eph. iv: 11). But all these varied gifts ,exercised here and there as the Head directs, are to one definite purpose: "for the perfecting of saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. iv: 12, R. V.). And this "building up" looks toward a definite termination: "unto a full-grown man, even the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. iv: 13).

In other words, as the human body, having received all of its members, and having developed all of its members, becomes complete, so it will be with the church which is Christ's body. It builds itself up, through the gifts, under the Lordship of Christ the Head, until every member is there. As the Spirit father says: "All the body, fitly framed and knit together, through that which every joint [member, gift] supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body, unto the building up of itself in love" (Eph. iv: 16, R. V.).

We now have a complete account of the formation of the church which is His body, and may return to our pentecostal illustration. Baptized into one body and vitally united to Christ, every one of the disciples was definitely endued with gift for some particular service. Under the headship of Christ, Peter stood up to preach, and the effect of the preaching was that "the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls" (Acts ii: 41). The body, formed by the baptism with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, had begun the building of itself up, through the testimony that Jesus was "both Christ and Lord" (Acts ii: 36).

But not all who heard the testimony were converted and

joined to the body of Christ—far from it. The disciples were still an *ecclesia*—a called out assembly, the church. And so it will be until the body is complete.

The idea that in building His church Christ is converting the world is not only negatived by the very word *ecclesia,* since "to call out of" implies that some called do not come out, but is also negatived by express Scripture (*e. g.,* Acts xv: 14), and by all experience. Paul found that while unto some he was the savor of life unto life, to others he was the savor of death unto death (2 Cor. ii: 15, 16). His gospel was "hid to them that are lost" (2 Cor. iv: 3); and He was made all things to all men that he "might by all means save *some*" (1 Cor. ix: 22).

All Jerusalem was not converted on the day of Pentecost, neither subsequently. Nor was Antioch converted, nor Corinth, nor Rome, nor Paris, nor London, nor New York, nor, it may be added, the smallest village in Christendom. The church is, and will remain, an *ecclesia.* The world is to be brought back to God, but through the kingdom, not the church.

The Relationships of the Church.

The church is a part of the kingdom of God, but is not the kingdom of God—of it, but not the whole of it, precisely, as the kingdom of Saxony is in the German empire, or as Pennsylvania is in the United States. It would be inexact to speak of the kingdom of Saxony and the German empire as equivalent expressions, though both of those bodies politic have much in common—language, literature, laws, supreme head, etc. So the church is in the kingdom of God, but not co-extensive with the kingdom. The kingdom of God includes all moral intelligences in every age and every sphere which are willingly subject to the divine authority.

This appears sufficiently from Heb. xii: 22, 23: "But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."

The "church which is His body" is not before the mind of the Spirit in the parables and other teachings of our Lord concerning "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xiii: 11). The sphere of *profession* in the widest sense, during the present age, is the subject of those parables. Doubtless the "children of the kingdom" (Matt. xiii: 38) are the *individuals* who, by baptism with the Spirit, are formed into the body of Christ; but the body, as such, is in no way the subject of the "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." For the body is itself a distinct "mystery" (Eph. iii: 1-11), the unfolding of which was committed to the Apostle Paul. It is a striking fact that while the church is mentioned but three times in the Gospels, and but nineteen times in the Acts, the word occurs sixty-two times in Paul's Epistles.

The "church which is His body" is related to the kingdom of heaven as it will be set up at the second coming of Christ, as the present Queen of Great Britain is related to *that* kingdom, namely, as being the bride of the King (Eph. v: 29-32; 2 Tim. ii: 12; Rev. vi: 10), and so associated with him in rule. It cannot be too clearly held that the work of God in this dispensation is not the gathering of *subjects* of the coming kingdom, but the outcalling of the *ekklesia,* the co-ruler with Christ of the coming kingdom. Individually the "many members" are by birth both royal and priestly, but the millennial authority is corporate rather than personal. Eph. v: 30, 31 ("For we are members of His body, of His flesh,

and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh") is quoted from Gen. ii: 23, 24, and connects therefore with Gen. i: 26-28, the central idea of which is joint dominion.

But the church is related to the coming kingdom in that "the bride, the Lamb's wife," is also the "new" or "holy" Jerusalem (Rev. xxi: 2, 3, 9-27). The distinctive glory of the ancient Jerusalem was that it was "the city (or capital) of the great king" (Matt. v: 35; Psa. cxxxv: 21; Isa. ii: 3), and that it contained the Temple (Psa. lxviii: 29; cxxii: 6-9). Both these distinctions meet in the church, the heavenly Jerusalem. It is "the tabernacle of God" (Rev. xxi: 2, 3), and the "Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it."

It is not at all that the earthly Jerusalem is done away during the kingdom age, but that the church, the Lamb's wife, the heavenly Jerusalem, is over it, as both the place and the means of the manifestation of God who dwells in it.

The "church which is His body" is related to God as *temple* and *habitation* (Eph. ii: 19-21; 1 Pet. ii: 4-7; 2 Cor. vi: 16). Here we are brought into the most intimate connection with Old Testament type and prophecy concerning Christ. For, while the Old Testament vision does not see the church, it does see Christ as the fulfiller of all the great types—the association of the church with His sufferings and glories, and with the mystery of His person, being reserved for the New Testament revelation.

The Tabernacle (and afterward the Temple, which was but the Tabernacle made permanent) was primarily the place of Jehovah's *abode* among His people (Ex. xxv: 8; xxix: 43-46; Lev. xxvi: 11, 12; 2 Kings xi: 13; Eph. ii: 22). *Secondly,* the Tabernacle or Temple was a house of

worship (Eph. ii:21; 1 Pet. ii:5; Heb. xiii:15, 16). Here the figure changes. Seen as one body with Christ, the church is a habitation of God, and also His temple, or spiritual house. Seen as "many members" (1 Cor. xii:20), the church is "an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. ii:5). In other words, the "many members" of the one body are an hierarchy of priests, of which Jesus Christ is the High Priest. The stones of the "spiritual house" are "living stones" and utter the praises of the God who abides in that house. It is as if every stone of Solomon's Temple had broken out with praise and prayer. The *manner* of God's possession of the "spiritual house," which is His temple and habitation, is "through the Spirit." The Spirit builds the house (1 Cor. xii:12, 13) and then takes up His abode in it (Eph. ii:22) as the manifestation of God. The Spirit is the holy cementer of the living stones to each other and to the "head of the corner," Christ; and the Spirit animates each stone with praise and prayer.

The relationhsips of the church to Christ have already, of necessity, been indicated, but may be briefly repeated.

(a) Corporately the church is "His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i:23). A body is for *service* and for *manifestation*. Every "member" is united to the body in a specific and not in an indefinite way (1 Cor. xii:12-27). That is to say, each "member" is assigned in the divine will to the exercise of a specific function in the service of the Head (1 Cor. xii:4-11). These functions are called "gifts"; and with such designation to specific function goes, as part of the "gift," an enablement or "manifestation of the Spirit" (1 Cor. xii:7). In true Christian service, therefore, nothing is left to self-pleasing or self-will. We serve the Head, whose members we are, when we take joy-

fully the place assigned us, ministering there as He may direct. The foot must not try to do the work of the hand.

The body is also for *manifestation.* By His incarnation the Word, who had previously been invisible to men, became visible by His human body (John i:14; 1 John i:1, 2). Precisely so, in the divine will and intent, "the church which is His body" is charged with the marvelous privilege of making Him still visible to men (2 Cor. iv:10, 11; 1 Pet. ii:9, R. V.; Gal. ii:20; Phil. i:21; John ix:5, with Matt. v:14).

(b) The church is the bride of Christ (Eph. v:29-32; 2 Cor. xi:2; Rev. xix:6-9). Since the divine thought of marriage is absolute identification, absolute oneness, it is obvious that the eternal position of the church is to be that of Christ Himself (Eph. v:30; i:6; John xvii:10, 16, 21-24).

Upon the relation of "the church which is His body" to the world, Scripture is absolutely silent. It may therefore be said that the church, corporately, has no relation to the world. It should be needless to add that a large and most important body of teaching has to do with the *individual Christian* and the world.

Since the gift of evangelist is one of the gifts for the upbuilding of the body of Christ, and since that body can grow only by winning "members" from the world, it may be said inferentially that the relation of "the church which is His body" to the world of mankind is a missionary relation—to save men out of the world. But this mission is, in a purely Biblical sense, the mission not of the body, corporately considered, but of each individual Christian.

The relation of "the church which is His body" to the heavenly inhabitants is, in grace, so exalted as almost to stagger faith. Not until we see that this dispensation is distin-

guished from all past and all future dispensations by the reign of *grace* (Rom. v:21) is it possible to receive this truth.

(a) The church is related to the Old Testament saints as a bride is related to the "friends" of her bridegroom. This is clearly stated by John the Baptist, the last of the Old Testament saints: "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the *friend of the bridegroom,* which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the brigegroom's voice: *this my joy* therefore is fulfilled" (John iii:29). Abraham was called "the friend of God" (Jas. ii:23; Isa. xli:8).

(b) No passage speaks of the relation of the church corporately to the angels, but it may be surely derived by inference from Heb. ii:12, where *ekklesia* is the inspired rendering of the Hebrew *qahal* in Psa. xxii:22. This quotation from Psa xxii indicates how the Old Testament, while not mentioning the church, yet leaves room for it. For certainly the church, and not Israel, is meant in Psa. xxii:22, for this part of the Psalm is not only messianic, but unmistakably post-resurrectional. Furthermore, the passage is quoted in Heb. ii:12 to show Christ's oneness with the church. It follows that not only individual Christians, but the church corporately is brought into the position of the Son Himself as described in the first and second chapters of Hebrews. These chapters have been called by Dr. A. T. Pierson "the inspired philosophy of the plan of salvation." Briefly, the doctrine is that the Son of God was better than the angels" as being Himself "God" and "Lord" (i:8-10). In incarnation He entered humanity, which was "made a little lower than the angels" (ii:7), that He might save men. Having saved them, He brings them into His own primal position, "for both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one" (ii:11); whereupon follows His

triumph "in the midst of the church" (ii: 12), which is thus associated with Him above the angels.

(c) The relation of the church to future judgments is still measured by her identification with Christ. 1 Cor. vi: 2, 3: "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that ye shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?" So far, then, from becoming the subjects of future judgments, the "many members" of Christ's body are associated with Him in judgment.

II. THE CHURCHES.

In a preceding address we have been looking together at the word church in its larger meaning of Christ's "body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." We have seen that the church, in that sense of the word, is a living organism in the same way that the human body is a living organism (1 Cor. xii: 12); that it is composed of a Head, Christ in glory; and of living members, the whole number of the regenerate between the two advents of Christ; that these living members are, by the Holy Spirit, baptized into Christ and into each other (1 Cor. xii: 13); and that these members are gathered out of the world, and edified by means of believers who, endued by the Holy Spirit with diverse gifts (1 Cor. xii: 4-28), are themselves gifts of the risen and glorified Head to various companies and localities on earth (Eph. iv: 8, 11-16). This church not only as to its Head, but in part as to its members is in heaven. It is obvious, therefore, that it cannot be in its entirety a visible church.

We come now to consider a second common use of the word church in the New Testament Scriptures, namely as

applied to local assemblies of professed believers. Such use is found in such passages as, "the church of God which is at Corinth" (1 Cor. i: 2); "the church that is in their house" (Rom. xvi: 5).

Doubtless both meanings were in the mind of our Lord in His twofold use of the word (Matt. xvi: 18), "Upon this rock will I build my church; and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it," and (Matt. xviii: 17), "and if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church." The first of the passages quoted could only refer to that body, not one member of which shall ever perish; the second passage implies a visible brotherhood competent to deal with questions of discipline.

The First Churches.

As a result of the first preaching of the Gospel after the descent of the Holy Spirit, "about three thousand" souls were converted and "added unto them," *i. e.*, unto the group of believers upon whom the Holy Spirit had fallen. This body of believers, all in Jerusalem, constituted the first of the local churches. For a moment, as one may say, the church which is his body was identical with the church at Jerusalem. Both were one. But when the Gospel broke its Jewish limitations, and some went as far as Antioch "preaching the Lord Jesus," a "great number believed," and these believers are immediately called a church (Acts xi: 19-26; xiii: 1, etc.). From Antioch, in turn, preachers—this time the great Apostle Paul, with Barnabas—were "sent forth by the Holy Ghost" (Acts xiii: 4); and, as had previously happened at Jerusalem and Antioch, the believers called out by the preaching of the Gospel, in every place, are, collectively spoken of as churches in those places (Acts xv: 41; xvi: 5; xviii: 22).

The Order of the Apostolic Churches.

At first the churches seem to have been simple assemblies of the Christians of a place or city, after the order of our Lord's saying (Matt. xviii: 20), "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." It will be remembered that these words are in close connection with verse 17, in which a local church is evidently in view. It is as if our Lord answered the unspoken question in the disciples' minds, "But what *is* this 'church' of which you speak, to which we are to 'tell' the sin of an unrepenting brother?" by saying: "It is where two or three are gathered together in (or 'into') my name" —the local assembly of Christ's disciples. The words imply more than mere human volition. "Are gathered" intimates a fellowship induced by the Holy Spirit in renewed hearts.

And it is most blessed that Matt. xviii: 20 ever remains the resource of believers in a time of confusion and apostasy. Such a gathering *is* a church. And I trust I may be pardoned by any whose practices I may cross, if I add that no conceivable good purpose is subserved by calling such a gathering anything *but* a church. It is true that "assembly" might, lexically, have been a better word for our English translation of *ecclesia,* but this is true of many other words —among them atonement, for example—and with all else which unhappily divides Christians to-day it raises a needless and harmful issue, not far removed from that "strife about words to no profit" against which we are solemnly warned for these last days (2 Tim. ii: 14) to insist on the words "assembly" or "gathering." There is an opprobrium inseparable from true separation (2 Tim. iii: 12), but there is a needless insistence on new terms, and idle peculiarities, which brings a just opprobrium. A local gathering of believers unto His Name is a church. Let it be called so.

It is wholly congruous with Acts xx: 7 to assume that the apostolic churches met on the first day of the week to break bread in remembrance of the Lord, as a testimony to His death, and expression of the unity of His one body, and a renewal of the hope of His coming (Luke xxii: 19, 20; Acts ii: 42; 1 Cor. xi: 23-26; 1 Cor. x: 16, 17).

It is only when the one passage (Acts xx: 7), "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread," is hardened into a new Leviticus, so that the heart looks for blessing to the table instead of to Himself, and would be disquieted and unblessed if the table were wanting on any particular Lord's day, though He, assuredly, would be there, that the simple and beautiful custom becomes a snare. Our Lord would have no legality with His table, but left a gracious liberty in His "as often."

But, while such was the simple order at the first, the Acts and Epistles note as of great importance, and that at a very early date, the designation of elders or bishops (the office is identical, Titus i: 5 and 7).

At first (*e. g.,* Acts xiv: 23) Paul, an Apostle, with Barnabas, an apostolic man, ordained or appointed the elders. This seems never to have been done at the first evangelistic visit to a place, but when the church, outgathered at the first visit, was revisited. The reason is obvious. Time was necessary for the development and manifestation of the gifts and graces necessary to the elders' office.

Later, it became necessary for the Apostle to send experienced and spiritual fellow laborers, as Titus and Timothy, to ordain (or appoint) elders. But when this stage had been reached, and the peculiar apostolic discernment could no longer be available, it is most beautiful to see that the Holy Spirit defines for all time in sacred Scripture, the tests by which the true elders may be known.

As in so many other things, the Scriptures replace the Apostolic presence and authority.

As to the *mode* of ordination of elders, it is indisputable that the word in Acts xvi: 23 translated "ordained" means to elect or appoint by extending the hand. Rotherham translates: "Moreover appointing by vote for them in each assembly, elders." The Septuagint denotes those who assisted Moses (Exodus xviii: 25) by the same Greek word translated elder in Titus and Timothy; and reference to Deut. i: 13 will show that Moses but ratified the people's choice. This, it need scarcely be said, is not referred to as *authoritative* for a New Testament church, but as illustrating the meaning of Acts xiv: 23. The Holy Spirit alone qualifies elders (Acts xx: 28) but the Scriptures guide the saints in recognizing and appointing them.

Deacons (the word means servant) are also described and appointed. It is questionable whether Acts vi: 1-6 refers definitely to this office, nor is the question vital. What we do know is that a New Testament local church as fully developed under the apostolic authority and direction, is defined in Phil. i: 1, "The saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons."

It has been contended that as we have no apostles we can have no *appointment* of elders and deacons, though we readily *discern* them. But in face of the Word of God in Titus i: 9 and 1 Timothy iii: 1-13, and of the emphasis constantly put in the Acts and Epistles upon the orderly appointment of these officers, we cannot doubt that now, as then, our Lord would have His churches constituted after His own divine order.

That the practice of ordination has been monstrously abused is no reason for its abandonment, but only for a return to its right use.

Unbiblical Perversions.

In Scripture, ordination (which simply means appointment) is never to preach or to administer ordinances, so called. Ministry of the word is wholly by gift (Eph. iv: 11, 12), ordination is to the local offices of elder and deacon. It should be added that of one elder over a local church, or one bishop over many churches the Scripture knows nothing. The divine order is many bishops over one church.

Again, the Scripture knows nothing of a church composed of churches—as the Methodist church, the Presbyterian church, etc., meaning many churches united into one church. It is wholly a Roman Catholic perversion retained in Protestant use. Any such "church" must be, like Romanism itself, simply a sect. In every such "church" there survives the papal leaven of a required love of and "loyalty" to, the sect. Innumerable are the evils produced by this utterly unscriptural practice. The multiplication of churches in every village, when one true apostolic church would include easily and naturally all Christians in the place; the reproduction on heathen ground of these wholly unnecessary divisions—these are but a few of the evils. *The local church is the beginning and end of divine organization for this age.* Whatever is less than "saints with the bishops and deacons" is to wilfully leave the divine organization incomplete (Titus i: 5); whatever is more than the local church, is a man-made addition to the divine organization.

If it is objected that Christian fellowship and missionary effort would fail if local churches are not somehow united organically, the sufficient and triumphant answer is that neither Christian fellowship nor missionary effort suffered during the first century, but, on the contrary, that century remains the ideal in these respects never even approximated by a sect divided by Protestantism; still less by Romish

organic solidarity. May the Lord give us grace to take our place about Himself, in the midst, neither deliberately refusing to perfect the divine order, nor, on the other hand, going beyond it.

THE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND INDWELLING OF THE SPIRIT.

By C. I. Scofield.

I am to speak to you, during this conference, if God gives strength, upon the Holy Spirit. I am glad to be permitted to speak on this very important subject, but I do want, at the outset, to say that I think we can very easily be too much occupied with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit in this dispensation is not in the world to occupy us with Himself, but with the Lord Jesus Christ, and I believe the chief characteristic of the Spirit-filled life is the heart occupation and exaltation of our ever blessed Saviour-Lord. Nevertheless there is in the New Testament a very important body of revelation concerning the Spirit, and surely it is there for our learning, and therefore we may, with glad hearts, give attention to it.

I want to speak, first of all, as clearing the ground, upon the personal relationships of the Holy Spirit, and if you will turn with me to the fourteenth chapter of John and the sixteenth and seventeenth verses you will find indicated in two short words from our Lord's lips, words which may easily be fixed in the memory, two of these relationships.

You see that I am assuming something. I am assuming that you all believe that when we speak of the Holy Spirit we are speaking of a person, just as really as when we speak of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. That

we are not speaking of an emanation from God, or an influence proceeding from God, nor a state of being, but we are speaking of the third person of the adorable and blessed Trinity. Our relationships with Him, therefore, are personal relationships. He is a real person, and just as we enter into various personal relationships here in the world, so is it with the Holy Spirit. He is a person, and His relationships with us are personal.

Now I ask you to turn with me to the fourteenth chapter of John, sixteenth and seventeenth verses, which I will read:

"I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever. Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him, but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

Just for the present I want you to hold in your minds those two little words, *with* and *in*. "He dwelleth with you." That was a present fact. "He shall be in you." A future promise. With and in.

Now stop for a moment and ask what was the condition of these disciples of our Lord with reference to eternal life, regeneration, relationship to God? We know what it was. Answering for the others Peter had said, you know, in his great confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." And our Lord, turning to Peter, said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is heaven."

They had real, actual, personal faith in Jesus as the Son of God, and they were receiving Him as their Saviour, and therefore they were born again. The Holy Spirit was not yet in them, but He was with them, and they were, by the new birth, children of God.

Turn now for a moment to the last chapter of Luke, the

49th verse, "And behold I send the promise of my Father upon you, but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high."

And now you have the third of the little words which indicate the personal relationships of the Holy Spirit. They are, *"with," "in,"* and *"upon."*

The Holy Spirit was "with" the disciples when our Lord was speaking to them in the upper chamber these wonderful words which we have recorded by John in the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth chapters.

If you will turn with me to the twentieth chapter of John's gospel, nineteenth verse, you will see the fulfillment, for those disciples, of that promise, "He shall be in you."

"Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when He had so said, He shewed unto them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you; as my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

I know very well there are brethren whom I honor and at whose feet as a learner I am, in most things, glad to sit, who teach concerning this act of our Lord's that it was simply symbolical; that it pre-figured Pentecost; that nothing really was done. When He breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," He did not impart to them the Holy Spirit and they did not receive the Holy Spirit to indwell them. I cannot believe it. I know of no Scripture which requires me to believe it.

I venture in all tenderness to suggest that the difficulty

in the minds of the brethren who so teach, which compels them to make a mere symbol of our Lord's words and action on the evening of His resurrection arise from their failure to distinguish between the "in" and "upon" relationships—between, that is to say, the Spirit as indwelling the believer and the Spirit as baptising the believer.

The great passage, John vii: 37-39: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet; because that Jesus was not yet glorified," refers exclusively to the "upon," or pentecostal relationship. In John iv: 14 our Lord spoke of the indwelling Spirit as an upspringing fountain, "The water that I shall give him shall be *in him,* a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life"; in John vii: 38 He spoke of the effect of the baptism with the Spirit as outflowing rivers. One is inner, and stands related to the believer's inner life, as we shall see later; the other has to do with his union to Christ in the one body, and to his outward life of service. "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses," etc. (Acts i: 8).

The Bible is the most exquisitely accurate of books, because it is verbally inspired, and neither in Greek nor in English do the words "in" and "upon" mean the same thing. One might with equal propriety contend that church and kingdom mean the same thing.

Certainly the baptism with the Spirit could not be until the Head of the body should be in glory, for the first effect of the baptism with the Spirit was to unite the believers to

Christ in the body, the church, and Eph. i: 22 expressly teaches that our Lord was not given to be head over the body till He had been raised from the dead and seated in glory. The word used of our Lord in the impartation of the indwelling Spirit (John xx: 22) is very intense. Darby renders: "He breathed *into* them."

It will be remembered, also, that the risen Lord had before Him a forty-days' ministry to these very men (Acts i: 3), and surely it was of necessity that they should be able to spiritually discern the truth "pertaining to the kingdom of God."

Now then we have these three simple ways in which the Holy Spirit stands related to the believer; *with* the believer; *within* the believer; *upon* the believer. And you observe that in the case of these personal disciples of our Lord we see these relationships assumed by the Holy Spirit with an interval between. That is, He was with them before He was within them, and He was within them before He was upon them.

And so long as the Gospel was preached to Jews only—that is during the period of which Acts i: 9 gives the record —an interval of time elapsed between the act of faith and the receiving of the Spirit. For Israel the mediation of the Apostles was necessary, but, from the preaching of Peter in the house of the Gentile Cornelius to this hour, no interval intervenes between the moment when faith is exercised, and the receiving of the Spirit as indwelling and baptising the believer. It is wholly unscriptural to tell believers to "seek the baptism" with the Spirit. Not one such injunction or exhortation can be found in the Apostolic writings. On the contrary, we are taught that "by one Spirit *are* we all baptised into one body." (1 Cor. xii: 13.)

Every believer on the Lord Jesus Christ has the Spirit with him, within him, and upon him.

Now I am afraid that I shall not carry you all with me just at once when I make that last statement. We are so constantly exhorted, all over the country, and by eminent brethren, too, and brethren greatly beloved in the Lord, to seek the baptism with the Spirit (the "upon" relationship), that the notion has come to be very widespread that one of the first duties of the Christian is to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The believer is, indeed, commanded to be *filled* with the Spirit (Eph. v: 18), which is quite another matter, as we shall see.

The first thing with which faith has to deal is the fact that the Spirit *does* indwell the believer. I remember very well a dear old man in the South, a very sweet and lovely Christian, who was manifesting continually the fruit of the Spirit, and yet I never heard him pray that he did not ask the Father to give him the Spirit, and I finally said to him: "Brother, I have heard you pray many times to the Father to give you the Holy Spirit. When do you expect your prayer to be answered? Why is it not answered?"

"Well," he said, "that is a great puzzle to me; I can't understand it. I have been praying for these years to the Father to give me the Spirit, and I have not had an answer."

"Well," I said, "brother, you have been praying for something you have already, and instead of praying the Father to give you the Spirit you should be thanking the Father that He has given you the Spirit." And so we went to the Word to see about that.

And now let us, you and I, see whether the Scripture justifies my statement that if we are believers on the Lord Jesus Christ the Spirit does indwell our bodies.

I take you, first of all, to 1 Corinthians, the sixth chapter

and nineteenth verse: "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"

But you will say, perhaps, that this was addressed to believers of the Apostolic day, to a superlative kind of thoroughly sanctified believers. No, indeed. The Apostle blames these Corinthian saints for everything that could be faulty in the life of a Christian. They are carnal, and walk as men; they are running after human leaders, Paul, Apollos, Cephas. They are going to law with one another before the world, and they are permitting a shocking condition of immorality in their assembly. And yet they were Christians. They were believers, but they were carnal believers, and to these the Apostle addressed this question: "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not our own?"

They were living on a very low level indeed, but they were real believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore the Spirit of God dwelt in their bodies, making them temples.

That is a tremendous and transforming fact—the Holy Spirit indwells us. He is not going away. He is there to stay. I say it is a transforming fact, but we must begin by believing it. If, upon the alone testimony of the word of God, you will simply believe that the Spirit has already taken up His abode in your mortal bodies, you will find a transformation beginning, and very possibly some things that you now allow will no longer be allowed if that is really believed.

We must take things from the Word of God first, and then when we believe them we have an answering experience. I turn again to the eighth of Romans, and ninth verse: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that

the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ's, he is none of His."

The word rendered "have" here is over and over again rendered "possess." If any man possesses not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His. The words "Spirit of Christ" do not mean to be like-minded with Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who is spoken of here. Therefore, if we are believers at all, dear friends, I repeat it, we *have* the Spirit.

But what a difference it makes when we come really to believe that within this wonderful temple of the body the mighty Spirit of God dwells, the Holy Spirit. Did you ever think why He is so constantly called holy? Surely He is no more holy than the Father or the Son. There is no pre-eminence of holiness in any one of the persons of the adorable Trinity. I have thought that perhaps it is because He enters so intimately into relationships with us as indwelling us. Perhaps God would remind us that He who dwells within us is, first of all, holy. Well, now if we come to believe that, dear friends, I repeat, there will come a change of life. I have seen it again and again.

I remember when I was a young man I was one of a house party at a country house, the home of a young friend of ours; and we were having what we called a good time, playing cards, and dancing, and all worldly amusements of that kind, when at dinner one evening the butler handed our host a telegram.

The face of our host, as he read the telegram, was a study. He appeared glad and he appeared confused, and presently he said, "My dear old mother will be here in an hour, on the next train, and all this dancing and card playing has got to stop. Why," he said, "I would not have her grieved by our doing any of these things in this house where she has lived for so many years for anything." And

he told the butler to get every card in the house and burn it up. Presently she came; a dear, sweet-faced old saint, and we all fell in love with her at once, and as the evening drew to its close she told her son to bring the family Bible, and she said, "You read and I will pray." I noticed it took him a long time to find the place, but at last he did find it, and then she knelt down and prayed. Well, we remained there about a week after that, and the whole life of that house from that moment was keyed to the fact that this Godly old saint had come among us. Everything took color from her presence.

My friends, if we really believed that the Holy Spirit dwelt within these bodies of ours, how long do you think we could allow many things about which we are so careless to-day?

Here for the present we leave this most important subject. The Holy Spirit has taken up His abode in our mortal bodies! That is quite enough for us to meditate upon now. Just as God turned the house which Solomon built into a temple by filling it with the shekinah glory, so that it became sacred for Jehovah's abode in the midst of Israel, so the Spirit's indwelling should make unholiness of thought or word a horror and a shame to us.

THE WORK OF THE INDWELLING SPIRIT.

We continue this evening the subject of the Holy Spirit. You will remember that we saw very clearly from the Word of God that if we are believers on the Lord Christ the Spirit of God dwells in our mortal bodies. It is a very beginning of days when a Christian really accepts that fact. When, instead of seeking the Spirit, we believe that He is already within.

And you will remember that we had begun to look together at the purposes of His indwelling—the work He seeks to do, and that we found as a primary result of His indwelling that the body becames a temple. We speak sometimes of meeting houses as sacred places because they have been set apart for holy uses, but, ah, how infinitely more holy and sacred is this wonderful temple of the body by reason of the fact that the Holy Spirit dwells in it. You know that when Solomon's temple was built it was given over to God. The ark was brought into the most holy place, and then the priests went out, and the glory of the Lord filled the house, and from that moment it was a temple. It was a temple in intent and purpose all the while Solomon was building it, but when God by the Shekinah glory took possession of it, then it became God's temple.

Well that is just true of us, dear friends, of these bodies of ours only in a far more wonderful sense, for God Himself dwells in these temples by His Spirit. It is a serious fact.

And next I ask you to note that the Spirt indwells the believer to give victory over the flesh, and oh, dear friends, how important that is. The old self life is there; the old Adam nature is there. In a very real sense the believer on the Lord Jesus Christ, who has been born of the Spirit and made a partaker of the divine nature, is two persons. More accurately he has within his one personality two natures. The divine nature imparted by the Spirit of God in the new birth and the old Adam nature. You will remember how, in an experimental way, this is brought out by the seventh chapter of Romans. There you have a renewed man, a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ; a justified believer, and knowing himself to be such, but he is destitute of either rest or victory. He is in constant inner strife, and his experi-

ence is one of constant defeat. It is one of the saddest and most tragic passages of the Word of God, and yet one is constrained to believe that it describes an average Christian experience. But the seventh of Romans is immediately followed by the eighth, and there the same man gives us quite a different aspect of Christian life and Christian experience. Indeed, the great apostle to the Gentiles illustrates in himself the only three possible phases of religious and Christian experience. First, as a Jew, he was a very religious man, intensely religious, working day and night at his religion: far more zealous in the religion of his fathers than many of his equals in his own nation, profiting more in it than they,—intensely religious, perfectly self-satisfied—but lost.

And then he met Jesus on the way to Damascus and was saved, and then he was miserable, for, as we discover by the seventh of Romans, he was trying to go on as a Christian under the law, and that is always misery, and always defeat.

And then Paul passed into a third phase of experience, of which Romans viii: 2 is the expression: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The conflict of the seventh of Romans had passed into victory—not by the method of law-works and self-determination, but by the power of the Spirit indwelling him.

Now, I believe that the professing church illustrates continually these three phases of experience. Hosts are in Paul's first state; religious churchgoers, church members. They are very diligent in the outward things of religion, and they are quite contented with themselves, but when you speak of inward struggles or any vital Christian experience, they wonder what you are talking about.

I was preaching once on Romans vii: 18, where the apostle, going back in his experience, tells of the time when

to will was present with him, but how to perform that which was good he found not.

One of my hearers came to me when the sermon was ended and said, "I cannot understand what was the matter with Paul. Why, it seems the easiest thing in the world to be good. I don't have any difficulty about being good." I asked my friend—a very faithful church member—what he thought the apostle Paul meant by being good. "Why," said he, "to be honest, pay your debts, be kind to your family, abstain from worldly amusements, stay away from theatres, and let cards alone, and that kind of thing." Said he, "I don't find any difficulty in that."

"Now," I answered, "let me give you my idea of what Paul meant," and I turned to some of the exhortations of the epistles concerning the Christian walk. I turned back to the beatitudes, "Blessed are the meek." I said, "Did you ever try to be meek?" Well, he could not say that he ever had. Didn't know that he admired meekness especially.

"Well," said I, "that is just it. You try to be meek once, and you will soon come upon Paul's difficulty. You can act meekly, of course, for awhile, until somebody angers you, or something arouses your pride. What the Apostle Paul agonized for was to *be* the beatitudes, and he could not accomplish it, though he was saved, a justified man.

Then, other multitudes, like Paul in the seventh of Romans, are saved but without victory over the self-life, striving to please God by law-works, and to get peace of conscience by religiousness. They are like Israel in the wilderness, restless, murmuring, often lusting after the things of Egypt, and, finally, a few, knowing the blessed purpose and power of the indwelling Spirit, quietly reckon upon Him for victory.

Some one said, "I hear a great deal of talk about the

Pope of Rome, but the pope who troubles me most is Pope Myself." Oh, dear friends, that is it, the real enemy is in us. When conscience, under the searchlight of Scripture, accuses us of failure, we straightway blame Satan. But read Mark vii:20-23, and remember that all that is latent within.

I beg you to note the apostle's secret of victory. He opens the secret to us at once: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The law of sin which is in his members, the law of death written and engraved in stones. The man is delivered. He is made free. By what? By new resolutions? By more prayer? By getting up earlier in the morning, and keeping the morning watch? Oh, he had gone through all that kind of thing when he was a Jew. What he wants is reality now, and he has got reality. Now a new law, a new power, a new enablement has come in and delivered the man; that is what he is telling us. And then he was working so hard in the seventh of Romans to perfect a character which God could approve, and now he finds the wonderful truth—the righteousness of the law is fulfilled *in* (not by) those who walk not after the law but after the Spirit; and so it goes on, one continuous shout of victory from the beginning to the end of the chapter, all based on the perfect work of Christ, but made into actual experience by the Holy Spirit dwelling in the believer.

Turn upon that point to one other passage, the fifth of Galatians, sixteenth and seventeenth verses: "This I say, then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." Why? "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." The omnipotent Spirit of God dwelling in the believer and the flesh in the believer are contrary the one to the other, but the Spirit has power, as

we walk in Him, perfectly to keep in the place of death the deeds of the body, the flesh and its motions. So that we are utterly without excuse if we are saying: "Well, I was angry this morning, but I am naturally high-tempered, but it is just a flash, and it is all over; I am not one of those who hold malice." Oh, yes, it is just a flash, as you turn on your doorstep to go to work in the morning, and your wife suffers over it all day long, and you let yourself off by pleading your nature. God help you!

Observe, it is not you and the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit. He does not ask any of your help in that. He asks only one thing, that you shall walk in Him. Now what is it to walk in the Spirit? Why, it is to walk in *yieldedness* to the Spirit.

You read that Jesus returned in the Spirit unto Galilee. He had, so far as we know, nothing to do that day but take a walk; but He was "in the Spirit"—a Spirit-guided Man that day. All His whole nature and being were consciously yielded up to the control of the Spirit. That is walking in the Spirit. Now here is an imperative promise: "Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." It is one of the divine imperatives. Ye *shall* not. God means that. And then He explains why ye shall not: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye may not do the things that ye would."

Oh, what a wonderful, wonderful office! What a wonderful privilege! The strife goes on, but it is the Spirit against the flesh. Omnipotence against the old Adam nature, and you, the new man, are out of the conflict, and in peace, and you are asked to do but one thing—walk in yieldedness to Him. What a privilege! What a marvelous privilege!

I would say again, that the Spirit of God dwells in the believer to produce that thing that we hear so much—if you will allow me to so put it—twaddle about—Christian character. It is the great talk of the modern preachers—character, character, character. One gets tired of the word. One feels some sense of relief that the word is not in the Bible. We are to be saved by character, we are to make character, and to build character.

I suppose the idea is that we are to practice sedulously some grace of the Christian life until it has become a kind of habit, and then we take up another, and build up, at last, a complete character. That is the seventh of Romans again.

What of Christian character? How does it come? Let me read (Galatians v:22,23).

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness" (ah, it *is* possible then to be meek!), "temperance. Against such there is no law."

There are the nine beautiful elements of real Christian character, and how are they produced? "The fruit of the Spirit." It carries one back in thought to our Lord's vital presentation, that intensely vital presentation of the great truth of our oneness with Him. "I am the vine, ye are the branches." "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." How does the branch bear fruit? It has no roots of its own, but because it is in the vine the life energies of the vine fill the branch and it grows, and blossoms, and at last there come the rich clusters of grapes, and the energy of the vine *in the branch* has produced that. The branch has not been worried over the fruit bearing. The branch has done nothing in the world but just abide in the vine. That is all.

These are the fruits; these are the graces which are not

possible to be produced by any manner of self-effort. By no manner of effort can you make yourself loving, by no manner of effort can you ever have peace; no mere will power will ever make you longsuffering. Nothing will give you gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, but the Spirit of God.

The Spirit of God by His own power and energy produces these things in the believer who walks in the Spirit, and the believer who walks in the Spirit rests on the divine imperative that he shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

Then the Spirit gives discernment of truth. I will read you just one passage. 1 Corinthians, second chapter: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," and therefore I do not care how learned in the learning of mankind any theologian or critic may be, if he without renewal and without spirituality is examining the word of God I will just ask him to please let me pass on and not take my time, because it is impossible for him to help me, and his authority as a critic, a scholar, I thank God, does not awe me. I would just as soon think of reading a long book about the color of a rose, written by a blind man who had never seen a rose, as I would a long criticism upon the Bible by a mere professional professor in some theological school; but now observe, "He that is spiritual discerneth all things."

Oh, that is it. It is by the Spirit that the truth of God is made actual to us, and ceases to be to us a dead word, and becomes to us the living word, which it surely is, the Spirit Himself marvelously interpreting it.

Now I beg you to note most carefully that another classification comes in here: "And I, brethren, could not speak

unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ" (1 Cor. iii: 1).

And they were Christians, and the Spirit was dwelling in them! But, dear friends, the Spirit indwelling is not a mechanical thing. Do not imagine that because you can take by faith unhesitatingly the fact that the Spirit does dwell in you that therefore you are of necessity spiritual. You may be very carnal. You may be grieving the Spirit and quenching the Spirit every conscious moment of your lives! It is the fact that you are yielding to the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, the Spirit having His sovereign way within, that makes the believer spiritual. Then, one may have a great deal of knowledge, and only be puffed up by it, and one may have very little knowledge, and yet be very spiritual, and, in the sphere of his capacity, very helpful in the things of God. For it is too often true that "knowledge puffeth up, love buildeth up."

Then, finally,—and with this I shall release you—that it is the Spirit who renews and nourishes the spiritual life.

Look at our Lord's beautiful figure in the fourth chapter of John's Gospel, "Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a fountain (not a well; the contrast is between Jacob's well and a fountain of water springing up) springing up into everlasting life."

But what a picture of renewal, what a picture of vitality; what a figure of vigor and freshness in the inner life. I believe that the great trouble with Christian people to-day is what might be called "low vitality." They have life, but they have not the life more abundantly.

I remember going once with a friend to speak a little to some poor weak ones who were in a convalescent home near London. And this friend said, "Won't you go out there

and speak to those poor ones? They are very weak, and you must give them milk. They cannot concentrate their minds very well, but do come and just give them a little simple word; it may be a blessing to them."

I was never in a place where my heart was more touched, and yet, remember, all those people there had been discharged by the doctor. They were all pronounced cured, or they could not be there, but there was something so pathetic in the weakness and irritability and lack of power of those poor people.

Why, as I look at the present day church statistics, it seems to me that many of them are little more than convalescent retreats. They have life, perhaps. They have had the touch of the Great Physician, but how ineffective they are. How unable they are to go on with anything in the work of the Lord. How little they apprehend even the possibilities that lie latent in Christian life. What do they need? They need to be drinking at the fountain. They need to be filled. What a picture of renewal that is. If a fountain is to be upspringing it must continually be fed from a source higher than itself, and the inlet must be kept open, and the outlet must be kept open, and then the fountain sends forth its crystal waters, and in its way sings a song of praise to God.

The water is there, but the difficulty is that the inlet and the outlet are both very much obstructed. We are obstructing the inlet when we grieve the Spirit of God, and we certainly obstruct the outlet when we quench the Spirit of God.

But there He is with all these possibilities of glorious and abundant life within. It is not power for service that I am speaking of now. That you get in the seventh chapter of John, the outflowing rivers of living water. It is the

inner life which is before the mind of the Lord Jesus here when He speaks of the upspringing fountain of living water; or in Paul's phrase, "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man."

Oh, there is the great arena where all spiritual victories must be gained. We hear so much to-day about power for service, and we are told to be "seeking" power for service.

Why, read the fourteen Epistles of Paul, and note that he never tells the believer to seek power for service—a strange omission, if these brethren are right. Not one single exhortation or command to seek the baptism of the Spirit or to seek power in all these Epistles. The power is waiting for us, but what we have here is not power; it is the inner life,—strengthened with might by His spirit in the inner man.

Now let us think of it, dear friends, just a little personally. The Spirt of God, with all these precious possibilities, latent in the fact, dwells in you and me. We *may* walk in victory—*are* we walking in victory? We *may* be faithful —*are* we faithful?

Have you noticed—and this is the last word—that in that parable of the vine and the branches there are three degrees of fruit-bearing? "Fruit," "more fruit," "much fruit," and never until we reach much fruit do we glorify the Father. "Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit." Oh, the religious world can imitate a poor little sort of fruit-bearing. Anyone can do the convenient things. There are a great many nice people in the world, but they cannot be holy. It is impossible. The world cannot be spiritual, but we may, and we may produce those lovely graces which are the fruit of the Spirit, refreshing to ourselves and a testimony unanswerable to all who know us.

BARABBAS THEORY OF THE ATONEMENT.

By C. I. Scofield.

Barabbas was condemned to die. No one has ever questioned the justice of his sentence. He was a rebel against the law, a robber and a murderer. And now the outraged law had laid strong hands on him, and he lay bound, under sentence of death. He was not under probation, but under doom. He was not awaiting trial, but execution. Just before him, as his only prospect, was the awful death of crucifixion. He knew what that meant: long hours of unspeakable agony, the hands and feet torn by great spikes, the wrist and shoulder joints dislocated by the dragging down of the body, each quivering nerve a separate torture through tension, a burning, unquenchable thirst, and, all around, a jeering, taunting mob. All the horizon of his life is narrowed to that. The only question is, *when?*

Even this begins to be answered. The jailers prepare three crosses. Ah! he well knows the three sockets cut in the hard rock out there in the Place of the Skull. Is one of these crosses for him? The very thought gives him a sense of suffocation, and of something clutching at his heart. Then he is told: yes, he is to suffer in the morning. Two malefactors are to die with him, but he, as the greater criminal, is to have the place of eminence, is to have the middle cross.

Then the night falls. But it is a disturbed night. Even in the prison it is perceived that something unusual is occurring. Confused noises, outcries, the tramping of feet, penetrate the thick walls. Barabbas dumbly wonders what it all means. Perhaps it is another insurrection such as that he, poor fool, raised against the majestic, inflexible Law. But the night wears on, and at last it is daylight—

the light of his last day! And now he hears footsteps, the key grinds in the lock, his prison door swings open, but, just as he is summoning all his brute's fortitude for the ordeal which awaits him, he hears the joyful words: "Go free! Go free! Barabbas; another takes your place; another is to die between the two malefactors."

As Barabbas emerged into the free, glorious sunshine, the crowd was already surging out toward the Place of the Skull. And then, if not before, the desire must have arisen to know who had been condemned to die in his place. One can easily imagine how Barabbas followed the throng, striving eagerly to see the Man who was to die for him. Perhaps it was not until the sound of the hammer driving the nails had ceased, and the cross—Barabbas' cross—had been upreared, bearing its awful burden, that Barabbas saw the Sufferer. We may well believe that, moved by a strange, irresistible drawing (John xii: 32), Barabbas pressed his way through the howling mob until he stood looking up into the face of Jesus.

Barabbas knew Him, of course. His substitute in agony there was the new Teacher out of Galilee, the Man who spake as never man spake, the Man whose life had been absolutely without sin. Adam sinned, and Abraham and Moses, and all the prophets, but not this Man. And, besides, He healed even leprosy by a touch or a word. One day when the crowd got hungry he manufactured enough food for five thousand men, not to mention women and children, out of five loaves and a few small fishes. Because of these, and like things, Barabbas perhaps really was convinced that He was the Messiah, the Son of God. But he had not become His disciple because he loved sin.

However that may have been, it is easy to see that Barab-

bas had no need to be a theologian to form a good working theory of the atonement.

First, He knew that he was a guilty wretch, under the righteous condemnation of the law (Luke xxiii: 25). And in both these respects Barabbas was a representative of all men (Rom. iii: 10-20, 23; Gal. iii: 10).

Secondly, Barabbas knew that the Sufferer before him had done no sin (John viii: 46; John xix: 4; 1 Peter ii: 22).

Thirdly, He knew that Jesus was, for him, a true substitute. He was verily and actually dying in his place and stead; an innocent and holy being bearing the very penalty which the law had justly decreed to him, Barabbas. Whoever, in the coming ages, might question whether Christ's death was vicarious and substitutional, *he* could never question it (2 Cor. v: 21; Gal. iii: 13; 1 Peter ii: 22-24; iii: 18; Isa. liii: 5, 6).

Fourthly, He knew that he had done nothing whatever to merit the marvelous interposition of that substitutional death. Whatever may have been back of it, it reached *him* as an act of pure grace (Ps. lxix: 19, 20; Eph. ii: 4-9; 2 Tim. i: 9; Tit. ii: 11; Rom. iv: 4, 5).

Fifthly, He knew that Christ's death for him was perfectly efficacious. There was, therefore, nothing for him to add to it. Just because Christ was dying, he was living. The only question before Pilate was whether Christ should die or Barabbas. When it was decided that Christ should die, Barabbas was set free. His assurance was complete the instant that his Substitute said, "It is finished," and gave up the ghost (John xix: 30; Eph. i: 7; Col. i: 14; Rom. v: 99; 1 John i: 7; Col. i: 20; Heb. x: 10, 14).

John McNeill, the great Scotch preacher, well says:

"My brethren, let me commend to you Barabbas' theory of the atonement. It is a good theory to preach on, pray on,

sing on, die on. Do you know any other theory that will stand these tests?"

MAY THE LORD COME AT ANY TIME?

C. I. Scofield.

No one denies that the Scriptures teach a second coming of Christ at some time; and the church, even in her worst estate, has never ceased to bear testimony by her creeds, at least to the same truth.

But upon the two questions of the *manner* and of the *time* of His return wide divergencies of teaching have lately arisen. Into the question of the manner of our Lord's second coming it is not my purpose to enter, but only to seek light from Scripture concerning the question of the *time of that coming.* And even here I shall consider only that aspect of His coming revealed through the Apostle Paul.

Attentive students of the Word are aware of that, to the Apostles to the Gentiles was committed a body of revelation concerning the *church;* that the Old Testament knows nothing of the church (though allowance is made for it); and that our Lord did no more than to announce His purpose to build it. Apart from the writings of the Spirit by Paul, we should know practically nothing of the mystery of the "church which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all."

But through these writings we are blessed with a full and clear revelation concerning the church, her origin, method, relationships, calling and destniy. Obviously, any inspired account of the church which should omit to tell what the end should be of her earthly pilgrimage, would be

in so far defective. We have, therefore, in two notable passages in the Epistles, written through Paul, a succinct but satisfying prophecy of that ending.

"For, as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order—Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's, at His coming . . . . Behold I show you a mystery! We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. xv:22, 23, 51, 52). "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you, by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent (go before) them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we, which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. iv:13-17).

It is this event, and this only, which is before us in this article. That there is a vast body of prophecy which has to do with the return of Christ *to the earth,* in connection with the setting up of the Messianic kingdom, the resumption of the divine dealings with Israel, and the blessing of the whole world, we are well aware. But the coming, of which the quoted passages speak, is not *to the earth,* but into

"the air"; it does not establish anything on the earth, but takes a people away from the earth.

The descent of the Lord into the air for the church, is not, therefore, that aspect of the second coming of which the Old Testament prophets speak (*e. g.,* Zech. xiv: 1-9), nor that aspect of His coming of which our Lord spoke in the Olivet discourse, and in His eschatalogical parables. It is part of what Paul calls "my gospel"—part of the truth concerning the church.

I now ask: May the coming of the Lord into the air for the church occur at any time? I answer, yes: and for two reasons.

I. *There is no predicted event which must be fulfilled before that coming.*

It is sometimes said that our Lord indicated an intervening condition when He said (Matt. xxiv: 14), "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations: and then shall the end come"; and it is objected this has not yet been accomplished.

To which I answer (1) that "the end" of which our Lord speaks is not His descent into the air for His church, but the "end of the age," concerning which the disciples had questioned Him (verse 3). (2) That the church is not set to preach the "gospel of the kingdom," but "the gospel of the grace of God"; and (3), that there is to be a world-wide preaching of the kingdom by the Jewish remnant during the tribulation. (Rev. vi: 9-11; vii: 13, 14 R. V.; Zech. viii: 23, etc.)

Again, it is said that the Lord does not return until after the millennium. As to this objection, it is sufficient to say that the parable of the Wheat and the Tares, of the Nobleman and the Far Country, and the descriptions of the course of this age, alike forbid the possibility of a millennium be-

fore the return of the Lord in glory to the earth. (Matt. xiii: 24-30, 36-43; Luke xix: 11-14; Matt. xxiv: 6-14; 2 Thess. ii: 7, 8.)

And, since the descent of the Lord into the air *must* precede His return in glory to the earth, it is evident that no millennium can possibly occur before the latter event.

Others aver that the great tribulation must run its course before the church can be caught up. To this I answer: (1) there is an express promise that the true church shall be kept "from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Rev. iii: 10.) (2) That the church, priestly and royal, is seen in the persons of the elders in heaven *before* the events which constitute the great tribulation begin to occur on the earth. These elders are seen in Rev. iv, and before the first, or seal, series of judgments begin—and these but *prepare*—the tribulation. (3) That all the types bear out this view. Sodom *could not* be destroyed till Lot was taken out of it, etc.

II. In the Epistles of Paul, who alone tells us of the rapture of the church, the characteristic attitude of the believer is *"waiting"*—not for the millennium, nor for the great tribulation, but for "His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus"; and, "looking for that blessed hope."

We, therefore, answer the question: "May the Lord come at any time?" affirmatively—He may.

And surely when we look about us we are constrained to echo the last prayer of Scripture: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

THE WALK OF FAITH.

C. I. Scofield.

Every great truth of the Gospel has some special passage of Scripture devoted to its definition and elucidation. The thirteenth of 1 Corinthians is the love chapter; the fifteenth of 1 Corinthians the resurrection chapter; the fourteenth of Romans the justification chapter; the fourth of 1 Thessalonians the hope chapter, the eleventh of Hebrews is the faith chapter. Faith, hope, love, and justification, and resurrection are everywhere mentioned or implied, but in the chapters specified the Holy Spirit makes those words central. We are to look together this afternoon at the great faith chapter.

For one I am glad that faith is here taken up experimentally rather than doctrinally. Let me illustrate for a moment. Romans iii-iv is a great doctrinal passage; Romans vii, a great experimental passage. The Apostle in the latter does not give an essay on the believer's two natures. He does something far more vivid and intense: he tells us his own experience of the strife between the new man and the old man in terms of pain and even of agony.

So here we have not a disquisition on faith, after the manner of the theologians, but we have a succession of pictures showing what faith has done, and how it works as a dominant principle in the life that now is. Abel and Enoch and Noah and Abraham and the other pattern men of faith pass before us as living illustrations of the faith principles.

It is not difficult to penetrate the writer's motive. He was writing to Hebrews who had at least professed faith in Christ, but who were in danger of lapsing back into Judaistic views of the importance of works. The writer meets that tendency indirectly but powerfully by showing them all the

great men of the Bible had been great not through works, but through faith—that faith was no new principle in the Gospel, but an old principle to which, in the Gospel, a universal application was given.

Let us then take up our chapter and learn from it how faith works in human lives.

First of all, then, note carefully that verse I is not a definition of faith, but a most precious as to the sphere in which faith works, and as to what it accomplishes in that sphere: "Now, faith is the giving substance to things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Evidently that statement, as I have pointed out, does not define faith. A phrase in 1 John v:14 gives the best definition of faith of which I have any knowledge: "and this is the confidence that we have in Him." Faith is confidence in God, and hence in God's word.

We cannot be too simple here. Faith may have secondary effects which react upon our feelings, but faith is not believing something because we "feel" that it is true, but because God says it is true. Let me be understood: I do not question, but rather affirm, that concerning matters of guidance in the daily path there is often a voice in the soul, but it is the Bible which points out the path, and the principles which must govern the life in that path. Abraham's faith is called "strong" in Romans iv:20, but what, after all, was that strong faith? He was "fully persuaded that what God had promised He was able also to perform." Faith demands a promise, a revelation, but bases upon that promise a "confidence in Him" which instantly makes the promised thing real.

When, as a child, my earthly father promised me anything, so sure was I of my father's integrity, of his loyalty to his word, that the thing promised had "substance."

Note now the sphere within which faith lives and moves and has its being: "things hoped for"; "things not seen." The contrast is between things "seen" and things "unseen." And this, let me remind you very exactly defines the respective spheres of science and of faith. Science has to do with things seen. Within that sphere science has wrought marvels, and deserves all honor. But in the sphere of the unseen, in the arcanum of things at present invisible, science has no place and covers herself with folly when she intrudes there. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. ii: 9).

It is in this sphere that faith walks erect, triumphant and with assured step. See how true this is.

The first use of faith, logically, is to get a sinner right with God, and that is the order here. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts" (Heb. xi: 4). Here, as you know, were the only two possible forms of religion. Cain brought an offering which stood for the union of his toil and God's providence, but it expressed neither the guilt of sin nor the divine condemnation of that guilt. And all modern perversions of Christianity have that fatal defect; they are unbloody. They may talk beautifully about the character of Christ, and poetically about His death, but they have no answer of suffering under the divine justice to the guilt of sin.

And Abel had nothing *but* his "gifts." It was of the slain firstling of the flock that God testified, not of Abel's character, when He declared him "righteous." The first use of faith, then, is that by it sinful man brings to holy God the offering which the justice of God demands, and which His

mercy has provided—"the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

And the very moment that is done, death, even physical death, is no longer a necessity. Enoch, who also had the testimony that he pleased God, was translated that he should not see death. *"We* shall not all sleep." The Lord may come at any moment, and if he does, not one of us will die. (1 Thess. iv: 14-16; 1 Cor. xv: 51, 52.)

Let us remember, too, that Enoch found faith a glorious thing to live by, as well. He "walked with God three hundred years," and only faith can walk with the Invisible.

The next instance, that of Noah, shows how faith concerning "things not seen as yet" instantly influences conduct. Mark the seven wonderful things in the old patriarch's faith.

1. The *ground* of his faith: "warned of God."
2. The *sphere* of his faith: "things not seen as yet."
3. The *effect* of his faith: "fear," that prudence which becomes sinful man with divine warning.
4. The *activity* of his faith: "he prepared an ark."
5. The *result* of his faith: "saved his house."
6. The *testimony* of his faith: "he condemned the world."
7. The *reward* of his faith: "righteousness."

There is a song, "'Tis old time religion," and the refrain, "'Tis good enough for me." Well, friends, there is old time salvation, which is better than religion, and I heartily add, "'Tis good enough for me."

Faith, again, is the only principle upon which practical separation can be maintained. "By faith Abraham when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out not knowing whither he should go." That call came to him in Ur of

the Chaldees, and it demanded separation from all that mere nature holds most dear, but by faith he "obeyed."

In Abraham, as you know, is illustrated the twofold separation demanded of the obedient believer. In leaving Ur he illustrated separation from the world; in leaving Lot he illustrated that harder, more difficult separation from carnal believers. Lot was a justified man (2 Pet. ii: 7) but he was sadly a vessel unto dishonor (2 Tim. ii: 19-21).

It is faith, again, which gives character to the walk. "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. xi: 9, 10). How loose he sat to things seen! Even to the very things which were his by promise. There was promised Abraham a twofold seed: "I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth" (Gen. xiii: 16); and, "Look now toward heaven and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." Instantly, Abraham's faith laid hold on the star-seed, the heavenly promise, and thenceforth a tent was good enough for the man who was looking for a city. Faith made that city more real to Abraham than the very mountains of Israel.

Mark once more that faith is the channel through which divine power enters human life. It was "through faith" that Sara received "strength to conceive seed." Oh, how necessary to-day is that faith which can "receive strength"!

Faith, once more, undertakes great things for God. "What should I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah and of David also, and of Samuel, and of the prophets; who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteous-

ness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to fight the armies of the aliens."

And here I challenge the hosts of doubt and of unbelief. What great thing for God or man was ever yet wrought by the atheist and the agnostic? Come, this is an old world; unbelief has had its innings for weary centuries—where is the record of its victories?

And, lastly, it is faith which sustains in trial. "Others were tortured not accepting deliverance." "And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy."

History, friends, bears no such record of every conceivable form of heroism as that which the heroes of faith have manifested. The soldier does his great exploits in the sight of thousands; at the most a soldier's death awaits him. Read the *acta sanctorum,* if you would know to what sublimities of heroism faith can inspire, under what extremity of suffering faith can sustain.

And yet, great as faith is in what, instrumentally, it effects, the blessed Object of faith, our adorable Lord is infinitely greater. There should be no chapter division at verse 40; for the Spirit could never leave us looking at mere faith. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us LOOKING UNTO JESUS."

After all, who gives faith its potency?—Jesus, "the author

of our faith"; and who insures the continuance of faith?—Jesus, the "finisher of our faith." "Author and finisher!" Well, then, let us draw our faith from Him, not looking at our faith, but ever and only "unto Jesus."

NOTES ON COLOSSIANS.

About one hundred miles east of Ephesus, in the peninsula called Asia Minor, the "Asia" of the Acts and Epistles, were situated the three towns mentioned in this Epistle—Colosse (i: 1), Laodicea (iv :13, 16), and Hierapolis (iv: 13). In these places in the year 64 churches of Christ had been established. This region lay outside the sphere of Paul's missionary labors in Asia, and these churches doubtless represent the effect of that secondary wave of missionary effort proceeding from Ephesus during Paul's residence there in A. D. 58 and 59, of which mention is made Acts xix: 10.

Colosse has long since perished, and the place is remembered among men only because of what God wrought in behalf of the little group of believers gathered there.

The occasion of the Epistle is readily gathered from its contents, from the Epistle to the Saints in Ephesus, and that to Philemon.

Paul was now (A. D. 64), a prisoner at Rome. Among those with whom he came into contact and who were born again through his gospel labors, was a runaway slave from Colosse named, oddly enough, Onesimus (*i. e.* "profitable"). Onesimus was the slave of a prominent Christian, Philemon of Colosse. It was a first demand of righteousness that Onesimus should return to his master, and in his behalf Paul wrote the letter to Philemon, "which belongs,

even as regards its Attic refinement and gracefulness, to the epistolary masterpieces of antiquity."—*Meyer.*

But other matters were stirring Paul to his depths. His fellow-prisoner, Epaphras had been "a faithful minister of Christ" to the church at Colosse, and he had communicated to the Apostle his own deep concern for the saints at Colosse and Laodicea respecting certain errors of doctrine which had found entrance there.

The state of the church as to fundamentals was still excellent, but subtle errors absolutely subversive of true Christianity were leavening the good meal. What that leaven was we gather from Paul's refutation.

Briefly, it was legality mingled with a false philosophic mysticism. "Beware," says the Apostle, "lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit"—that is one part of the danger. "After the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world"—the other part of the danger.

"Rudiments of the world" is Paul's phrase for the law, and for all mere formalism and externalism in religion. But this was not Judaic legality, emanating from Jerusalem, as in Galatia, but a mystical legality emanating probably from Alexandria. The former consisted in letter-bondage to the law—that is to written precept; the philosophic legality consisted in being "wise above what was written" a strictness beyond letter of Scripture—in a word, asceticism: "Touch not, taste not," etc., and severities inflicted on the body.

The philosophy was that which came later to be called Gnosticism (Greek *gnosis*—"knowledge"). The core of the Gnostic heresy was its doctrine of Christ, " to whom they did not leave His full divine dignity, but assigned to Him merely the first rank in the higher order of spirits"—*Heinrich A. W. Meyer.*

The effect of gnosticism was to put God at an infinite

distance from men; to fill that distance with orders of angelic beings; and to give Christ only the highest place among these.

Matter was conceived of as evil, and the material creation as the work of a lower spiritual being whom they called the Demiurge.

Gnosticism has passed away as a philosophy, but the efforts to degrade Christ from His full and proper deity; to make a merit of ascetic practices ("touch not, taste not"); and to conceive of the body and the natural physical desires as inherently evil and degrading—these, under ever new forms, survive and are abroad to-day. Against them Colossians is a perpetual and unanswerable declaration of the Spirit of God.

Between a false legality and a false philosophy of Christ, His person, His work, and His universe, the true Christian faith ever moves.

Chapter I.

This chapter falls naturally into three parts: I. Introductory, vs. 1-8. II. The Apostolic prayer, vs. 9-14. III. The supremacy and work of Christ, vs. 15-29.

The Apostle begins with the usual affirmation of the divine origin of his apostleship. He is an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God (cf. Gal. i:1, 11, 12). This is an affirmation of immense importance. If Paul is a theologian framing a system of doctrines which he believes to embody Christian truth, that is one thing; if he is God's sent-one communicating words from God, that is another thing. He affirms everywhere and always that he is the latter.

And the first thing the Spirit bids him write to the Saints at Colosse is a message from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. That message is, "Grace be unto you, and

peace"; a message, not a pious wish. Remember that. It is always grace, and it is always peace. The Father may have a controversy with us about some of our ways, but the peace made by the blood of His cross ever abides, and every motion of the divine heart toward us is grace.

The Apostle is thankful to God for three things concerning the Colossians, their faith, love, and hope. This is the true order. The object of faith is Christ Jesus, of love, the saints—*all* Saints, and not merely the lovable Saints. That is the real test of faith, "love towards all the saints." "Lovest thou me? Feed my sheep." Faith begins with a backward look to Calvary; love looks around upon the brethren; hope looks forward to the coming of the Lord.

This kind of fruit is what Paul expects. The gospel is a vitalizing principle, not merely a "plan of salvation." Where the grace of God is known in truth fruit follows, the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit. And love, love toward all saints, comes first, and is first.

The Colossians learned that from Epaphras, now Paul's fellow prisoner. He is called a faithful minister of Christ. The word for "minister" is *diaconos*—servant, "deacon." In our fear of what is called "one man ministry" let us not pervert the Scriptures. There were men in the Apostolic churches who did not go about. The churches of Jesus Christ need shepherding as well as teaching. No one can do that who does not know the sheep, and who is not known to the sheep. Epaphras, says Paul, "is one of you." Men running about with doctrines, however good, zealous and well-taught, can never be *that* to the local assemblies.

And this brings us to the great Apostolic prayer. There is in it a beautiful seven-fold moral order.

(1) All begins with the will of God. The primary reference is to that will as it concerns the believer of this dis-

pensation. "According to the good pleasure of His will" He has predestinated us to the adoption of sons. Sonship is more than childship. The Old Testament saints were children, but were kept under the law as a pedagogue, and differed nothing from servants. But Christ has changed all that by redemption. Now we are no more servants, but sons.

(2) And this gives character to the *walk*. The knowledge of His will in our position as sons is essential to a walk "unto all pleasing." The returning prodigal had so lost the sense of what was suited to the father's heart and mind as to think only of a hired servant's place. Too many make this mistake, supposing it to be true humility, when it is only grieving the Father's heart, and thwarting the Father's will.

(3) And now we come to what so many put first—work. But it makes all the difference whether we work as sons or as servants. It makes all the difference whether we work in the place where His will has put us, or in a place and way of self-choosing. Before the Lord speaks of fruit-bearing He puts the disciples in their right place. "Henceforth I call you not servants . . . but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye shall go and bring forth fruit."

In the body of Christ every member has a place and function sovereignly fixed "as it hath pleased Him." In that place and fulfilling that function, fruit is sure.

(4) "And increasing in the knowledge of God." This goes beyond the knowledge of His will to an ever deeper knowledge of Him who wills. This order may not be varied; to know His will; to walk in a way suited to the place which that will has given us; to be diligent in our appointed work—these are the indispensable steps to personal and first hand acquaintanceship with God.

(5) The fifth element is strength in view of the inescapable experiences, which await the believers. And how adequate the provision, "*all* might, according to *His* glorious power."

(6) And this again is not an end but, like the knowledge of His will, a means to an end. The end is two-fold; the attainment of patience, and of a joy so fundamental that suffering, though long continued, cannot quench it.

(7) But the crown of all Christian experience is "giving thanks." The Apostle sets forth the reasons for thankfulness. They are found in the permanent results of the work of Christ. Note the past tense. "*Hath* made us meet"; "*Hath* delivered us"; "Hath translated us"; "We *have* redemption, even the forgiveness of sins." Underneath all the shifting experiences of the believer's life, and the ebb and flow of his feelings, these eternal results of redemption abide. They are safe in the changeless past.

> "My soul looks back to see
> The burden thou did'st bear,
> While hanging on the cursed tree,
> And knows her guilt was THERE."

No believer may know abiding peace until he sees that before the world was he chosen in Christ, and that centuries before He was born God Himself took up the question of His guilt and forever disposed of it in the cross of Christ. It can never be brought in issue again. God will not do it, and "if God be for us who can be against us?" "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Our shameful sin is *res adjudicata*—a matter already and forever adjudicated.

Chapter II.

The Apostle comes now to the core of the Epistle, the dangers to the simple and pure faith of the Gospel, which had aroused his solicitude in behalf of the saints at Colosse. If these had been local and transitory they might well be passed over with slight mention.

But so it was in the divine providence that the perils to the faith at Colosse were the ever present perils in the midst of which the saints of all the centuries have lived. Paul prefaces the statement of them with an exhortation (Col. ii: 1-7). In two things the Apostle would have the saints knit together, in love and in an understanding and acknowledgment of the "mystery."

A "mystery" in Scripture is some truth which has been kept back but is now revealed. There are seven such mysteries in the New Testament, and, save the first, the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, each is mentioned repeatedly. Here it is the mystery of God, that is Christ.* A false mysticism was abroad at Colosse; the Spirit of God will meet this with the true mysticism. This is ever the Bible way. Error is not simply denied; it is also confronted with the truth. Already one great mystery had been mentioned, that of the indwelling Christ. The practical side of this is brought out in Galatians where the inliving Christ is shown to be the governing fact of this present life of the believer. The whole problem, indeed, of the new life in Christ is to outlive Him who inlives. But here the source of all the Christian mysteries is revealed—the mystery of God Himself. The apostle applies this, first of all to the believer's walk. Mysteries belong to the sphere of faith, not

*In Him, *the* Christ of God, are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (*gnosis*) Verse 3.

sight. We received Jesus Christ by faith on the alone authority of the Word of God. Very well: as we began so we must go on. The Christian is not a person who, having made one venture into the sphere of faith when he received the Lord Jesus, may now live by sight and sound. He is a citizen of an unseen heaven; served by the unseen messengers of an unseen Father; preserved unto an unseen inheritance; loves and serves an unseen Christ. To these great verities of revelation faith gives substance: to faith they are more real than the granite hills.

The three perils are, philosophy, the tradition (or custom) of men, and legality, a return to the law.

Against philosophy the warning is absolute. When science is in question the warning is qualified, for there is a true science. But there is no true philosophy. Philosophy is an attempt to investigate and explain the phenomena of a moral universe inhabited by morally accountable human beings, and to deduce principles for the wise and right government of life. But the Holy Scriptures are a divine and infallible revelation from God on that very subject. No men have ever thought so profoundly about the problems of life as the Greek philosophers, but their conclusions were summed up by inspiration as but "the wisdom of this world" which is mere "foolishness" with God. But the terrible effect of this "wisdom of men," this "philosophy," is that it so perverts the mind of man that the true wisdom, the "wisdom of God" seems to him mere "foolishness." That human philosophy is really foolishness is completely attested by the fact that after thousands of years it has reached no stable conclusion, the "philosophia ultima" is still an unrealized dream. One of the greatest of modern philosophers has said that over all philosophic speculation must be written the words, "Ever not quite."

In no sphere, however, has philosophy wrought such havoc as in the sphere of revealed religion. Philosophies of the plan of salvation; philosophies of the atonement; philosophies of prayer—these have abounded, and it is they which have divided Christians into warring camps. "Beware lest any man make a spoil of you through philosophy, and vain deceit."

The particular form of the philosophic peril at Colosse, Gnosticism, has passed away. Men no longer conceive of evil as lodged in matter, or seek to exonerate God from the crime of having created matter by inventing a creative creature, the "Urge" or "Demi-urge." But "religious" man is still wise above what is written, "intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind," as so-called Christian Science,* Theosophy, and a host of modern cults testify.

The third peril lay in what the Apostle calls "the rudiments [or "elements"] of the world"—a phrase which the Holy Spirit uses here and elsewhere for the law, especially the "law contained in ordinances." The Spirit in the New Testament never, it should be needless to say, makes light of the law. On the contrary it is the New Testament which especially honors the law. Not the law but the human perversion of the law by wresting it from the divine purpose—the using of the law "unlawfully," this is what the Spirit would guard against. "The law is not made for a righteous man" may be written over Romans vi: 8, and over the whole Epistle to the Galatians. The Holy Spirit does not, let it be repeated, object to the law itself, but to the law as misapplied. It is, in the divine government and education of man, an "elementary," or "rudimentary" discipline. It be-

*Partially a revival of ancient Gnosticism.

longs to the age intermediate between Promise and Grace. It is a pedagogue for children who, during their minority, differ nothing from servants though heirs of all.

In beautiful harmony with this the Apostle constantly uses the law as an "instruction in righteousness" for his Gentile babes in Christ who, converted out of heathenism, are ignorant of these very "elements," or "rudiments" of righteousness.

The second peril is "the tradition of men." The Apostle has in mind here that which men have superadded to revelation. In Judaism it was that which men had added to the law. Upon the clear revelations of Exodus and Leviticus the rabbins had built a structure of intolerable oppressiveness. The Sabbath is an instance. As instituted by God it was simply and only a rest day for man and beast. Under the traditions of men it became a hard, ascetic synagogue—keeping religious observance, under which tender consciences were tortured. To the Gospel the same evil work of man has added asceticism in all its myriad forms, all of which have one root—the notion that the stern repression of all natural joy is essential to the pleasing of the God who implanted in man's nature the capacities for those very joys. In its grosser forms Protestant Christianity has cast off the "tradition" which made it holier to be a nun than a mother; to be a monk than a father; to wear sackcloth than silk; to fast than eat. But the whole spirit of man-made "ordinances" abides, and so absolutely dominates the thinking and judgments of thousands of earnest souls that the apostolic injunction: Let, therefore, the judgment of no man govern you "in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day . . or of the Sabbath," makes a demand upon Christian manliness beyond the courage of most.

Jesus Christ was no ascetic. He was as far from Es-

seneism as from Pharisaism, or Herodianism, and the stricter religious opinion of His day condemned Him as a Sabbath-breaker, a glutton and wine-bibber.

Against these three abiding perils: the peril from philosophic intrusion into the sphere of revelation; of ascetic and pietistic attempts to be holy by works of which Scripture says nothing, and of putting the objects of God's free grace back under the elementary system of law, the Apostle rears great divinely revealed principles.

1. The believer is already complete in Christ. It is obvious that neither philosophy, pietism, nor legality can add to completeness. Christ "fulfilled all righteousness." Surely in behalf of the new creation, and then went to a sacrificial death in which the believer also died, and rose from the grave into a life which the believer shares. Is it a question of legal ordinances? They are nailed to the cross. It is a question of malefic "angels, principalities and powers?" Christ triumphed over them openly in the believer's behalf.

2. The second great principle is that the believer's new life is not truly nourished by legal observances or ascetic practices. Just as the branches draw all life and growth from the true Vine, so the living members in the living body of Christ grow by renewals of life from the Head. It is a total misconception of Christianity to conceive of the believer as a religionist with a series of forms and observances. He is a worshipper, but his place of worship is known only to faith, and accessible only through the Spirit. God never had pleasure in religious forms, even the forms which He commanded; they were mere shadows cast by a coming One. Now He is come, and the body of which the believer is a member is His body. How childish and trivial to suppose that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

can be pleased, or the believer benefited, by "will worship," ascetic practices, philosophical mysticisms!

3. The Apostle exposes the real origin of these: they have, to the fleshly mind "a shew of wisdom," but they but serve to exalt the flesh. Their deluded votaries, Romanist, Protestant—what not, fancy themselves holier than their brethren who seek only to yield all to the sway of the inliving One that He may live out in them the life of simplicity, naturalness, and helpfulness which He illustrated when on earth.

* * * * * *

Chapter III.

We reach now the preceptive part of the Epistle, the principles which are to govern the walk of a man in whom dwells Christ, who is complete in Him, and who needs neither ordinance, nor holy days, nor ascetic practices for his sanctification.

At this point many would send us back to the law. We are told on every hand that, while the law is not a means of life it still remains the rule, or as some say the standard of life. But the apostle has already told us that the law is a rudimentary discipline, and that as to ordinances, Christ nailed them to His cross. It should be a very serious matter to tear from the cross of Jesus Christ anything which He nailed to it. To man in and of the earth, having earthly promises, the law was a perfect testing. Moreover, "the law is spiritual," and searches the depths, showing man not only that he has sinned, but that he is sin; that not only does he need forgiveness, but deliverance also from a law in his members mightier than the law of his mind. For such a state nothing but death and resurrection can avail. This,

for every believer, is the reckoning of God, who sees him in Christ dying, in Christ living again in newness of life.

Upon that ground, therefore, the preceptive portion of this, as of all other church epistles take the believer. "If ye then be risen with Christ." That is a word which it behooves us to learn. We may make it a touchstone by which to try every thought, every act, every motive, every plan. Is it suited to a man who was united to the Lord Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection, and in whom Christ lives, the hope of glory?

And so the Spirit develops the principle. "If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things above where the Christ is sitting at the right hand of God; have your mind on things above, not on the things on the earth." (Darby's Trans.)

That strikes the key-note of the new life in Christ Jesus. All of the life is to be harmonized to that. Nothing is to be allowed which would make a discord in that heavenly music. The ear of faith catches the melody of the bells upon the robe of our High Priest who has passed into the holiest, there to present the blood of our atonement, and to appear in the presence of God for us, and the whole life is to be the echo on earth of those bells in heaven.

So the Ephesians has it, only the illustration is drawn from the sister art, poesy. "For we are his poem [Gk. poiema] having been created in Christ Jesus for good works." And Peter tells us that we are to "chorus together" the graces of virtue, knowledge, temperance, brotherly love and full love.

Humiliating failure, unspirituality, unfruitfulness result inevitably from our failure to conceive of the life which we now live in the flesh as the very life of the risen Christ, which in us co-crucified and co-risen, seeks to reproduce in

and through us the graces which are in Him. So long as we conceive of ourselves as men, merely, earthlings and of the earth, we will "walk as men." When we really take account of ourselves as "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus," and therefore as truly "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," we will with purpose of heart "seek those things which are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God."

The Spirit dwells upon this great principle, that the position into which grace has brought us is to govern the walk on earth. "For ye have died, and your life is hid with the Christ in God." "Hid," as the life of the stream that makes music and brings freshness and joy in the valley is hid in the spring away yonder on the mountain. Our life is there as to its origin and its renewal. We live His life as the members of our bodies live our life; as the branch lives the life of the Vine. It is an unsevered life, one life in Him and in us.

We think of life in two ways: as a fact, and as a series of thoughts and actions. The law took man in Adam and gave him a perfect rule; grace takes man dead in trespasses and sins, and imparting to him the divine nature, and the very life of the risen Son of God, puts glory before him as his absolutely sure destiny, and exhorts that he manifest this new life in new thoughts and deeds. It is the new principle of grace: "Make the tree good, and his fruit good."

The Spirit now applies the great principle of death and resurrection to the practical details of life.

1. The man who walks in newness of life will "mortify" in the members which are upon the earth, *i. e.*, the mortal body, the things which, in an unbeliever, bring judgment. Some of those "things" are enumerated. They are of "the

works of the flesh" described in Galatians, and are the very opposites of the "fruit of the Spirit."

"Mortify" is an unflinching word. It means, "make dead." We must go to Romans for the means by which we are to "make dead" the evils most deeply rooted in fallen human nature—perversions of the sex principle, and covetousness. Is is "through the Spirit," and only so, that the believer puts these things in the place of death. Self-effort is utterly vain. The Seventh of Romans is the record of a converted man, and that man no less a personage than the Apostle Paul, seeking self-victory over self, only to be utterly defeated. But the same man, instructed as to his privilege in the Spirit, finds a victory over self so quiet and complete that he can state it in three lines: "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

But making dead the deeds of the body, that is a walk in victory over known and specific sin, is a vastly different thing from "the entire eradication of the flesh," of which some speak. It is a phrase never found in Scripture. Two facts are ever present to the believer—the fact of "sin that dwelleth in me," and the fact that the body is the temple of the Holy Ghost "which is in you, which ye have of God." And "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other"—to what end? "That ye may not do the [evil] things that [left to yourself] ye would."

But the shameful categories of "fornication, uncleanness, evil desire, and covetousness" are not the only things to be "put away" in the Spirit's power. Let us give heed to this. Vast numbers of Christians who walk in victory over sex sins make little of "anger, wrath, malice," etc. Evil temper in the home, the outlash of anger, or, if this be restrained,

the indulgence in a cold cutting sarcasm toward children or servants—these may go with the most perfect courtesy toward strangers, or acquaintances. Alas! they may go, too, with very high doctrine, and great scrupulosity in matters of Biblical teaching.

There is to be, therefore, a thorough "putting off," and "putting on." Christ for us is justification; Christ in us is sanctification; Christ upon us is manifestation. The result will be the blessed life. "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another; in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

Lovely picture! And now, having as one may say drawn the landscape of the blessed life, the Spirit fills it with figures: "wives," "husbands," "children," "fathers," "servants," "masters," "them without." Ah! the blessed life is not, then, a vision, a fabled Atalantis, an imaginary Republic, a cloudy ideal, or, at most, an inward state. No. The blessed life is first of all a life right with God, and then a life of blessed peace and song within, and all this unto a life of practical righteousness, kindliness, helpfulness and power.

The apostle finds time to call Tychicus "a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord." One supposes that Tychicus was at many points imperfect; that Paul might have backbitten Tychicus as easily as praised him. It is always so. Two classes of facts are patent in the life of every servant of God: his shortcomings, imperfections, and failures, equally with his zeal, his prayerfulness, his real loyalty to Jesus Christ. We may dwell upon either: Paul seems to have rejoiced in the good which

he saw in his brethren. One does not think that any one ever left a private interview with Paul with a bad taste in his mouth about Tychicus and Timothy—no, nor even Barnabas and John Mark!

The Epistle closes with, perhaps, the loveliest pictures of all—Epaphras on his knees in prison. We must not miss that. Epaphras had labored in the Word at Colosse. He was, probably, a "pastor and teacher" there; and there is, incidentally, a word to such: "Epaphras, *who is one of you.*" He was not "lording it over God's heritage," but a brother-man amongst those Colossian believers. But now he is a prisoner at Rome, and can no longer teach and exhort at Colosse. Modern speech would describe him as, "providentially laid aside." Evidently he did not think so of himself, and so we have a beautiful illustration of the difference between the believer's office as a priest, an office which all believers of this age have alike, and his gift as a servant. Epaphras could no longer minister his gift, but Nero's walls could not shut him out from access to God in the holiest, and so, laying down for the time his gift, he remembers that he is a priest, and Paul could say of him: "Always laboring fervently for you in prayers." And who can doubt that Epaphras' prayers for his Colossian flock were, after all, his mightiest ministry?

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